

TORCH

NEWSPAPER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST LEAGUE

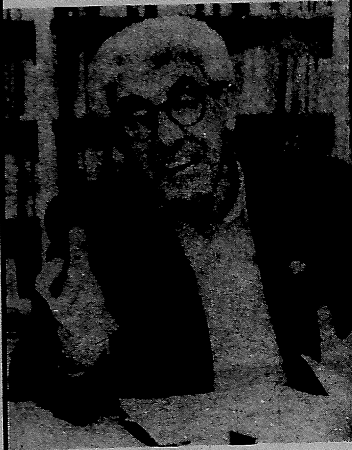


VOLUME 7, NUMBER 4

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Energy, Environment and the Economic Crisis

The Contributions
and Contradictions
of Barry Commoner



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TDC: A Time Bomb

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SECCION
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ESPANOL

Recession arrives; depression on the way?

By WILLIAM FALK

The long-postponed U.S. recession has begun. A half dozen economic indicators—none of them decisive, but meaningful when put together—all point the same way: down.

The index of leading indicators, a composite figure computed by the Commerce Department for the purpose of gauging the economy, dropped in March, for the fifth month in a row. Three months of decline is considered a sure sign of coming recession.

Among the other signs of recession

is a severe drop in the construction of new housing. The construction industry is the largest employer in the U.S. and new housing construction was a key factor in the recovery from the 1975 recession.

In addition, a drop in new housing starts is almost always followed by a drop in purchases of large appliances, furniture, etc., the sales of which also played a major role in keeping the economy going over the past few years. Furniture sales dropped in March for the first time since 1975, and other retail sales were down in

February.

Unemployment, another indicator of recession, is beginning to climb. As we go to press, over 250,000 auto-workers are on layoff. Uniroyal is closing two of its plants permanently, eliminating 3,300 jobs. The Youngstown, Ohio, area has been hit with another steel mill closing and, in Chicago, Wisconsin Steel permanently shut down on March 31 without even a day's warning, leaving 4,100 workers without jobs.

The official unemployment figure (Continued on page 10)

STOP THE KLAN IN KOKOMO!

Since the Ku Klux Klan announced plans for a march in Kokomo, Indiana, the RSL has been organizing for a counter-demonstration. Our plans are to surround the Klan march and turn it into a mass, anti-Klan rally. We want to use the opportunity to educate working people about the nature of the Klan threat and organize them to fight it. Moreover, a successful counter-demonstration can hinder the Klan from organizing and recruiting and strengthen the organization and morale of the anti-Klan forces.

Our organizing has proceeded on several fronts:

- A team of RSL organizers has begun work in Kokomo. We have gotten a good response from Delco and Chrysler workers, who work in plants in the area. House meetings are being called to organize a nucleus of class-conscious anti-Klan fighters.

- Union and community leaders have been contacted. Some of these leaders had been planning to urge people to stay away from the Klan march and to urge downtown merchants to close their shops for the day. Now the proposal for a counter-demonstration is being seriously discussed. It remains to be seen whether these leaders will join the demonstration.

- A Midwest coalition has been formed to organize a four-state mobilization for the counter-demonstration. Among the groups that have indicated they will join us in the counter-demonstration are Those United to Fight Fascism (TUFF) in Columbus, Ohio, the Liberation League, Chutzpah, the Gay Revolutionary Discussion Group in Chicago, the Political Action Committee of the



RSL organized counter-demonstration to Klan march in Muncie, Indiana, last August.

Lesbian Sisters Building a Network (LSBN) in Detroit and the Communist Workers Party (CWP) in Detroit and Chicago.

We can unite and defeat the Klan. The demonstration in Kokomo can be a big step forward in the anti-Klan struggle. Join us in Kokomo on April 26! □

(For more coverage of the struggle against the Klan around the country, see pages 4 and 5.)

**our
readers
write...**

Send letters to:
TORCH, PO Box 1288
New York, NY 10001

Nazi "Brotherhood" asks Harp to join

Dear Friends,

I've been following the Nazi recruiting drive out of Greensboro, North Carolina, that Torch has been reporting on. Something very interesting happened to me shortly after the first report, and I thought that it might be important to you and others to know it to show that the drive in Greensboro is not unique or an isolated incident.

Shortly after reading the Torch's first report on the Nazi recruiting drive in prison, a prisoner on my yard here in San Quentin gave me a little "friendly advice" (he meant well) about talking unity between all prisoners and revolution in here. He told me that not only does the Man dislike my talk, but so do certain prisoners who exploit other prisoners and those who believe in White Power, like the KKK and the Nazis. I could be killed quicker for being political than for burning someone in a dope deal in this prison and the Man would help by just watching if not setting me up.

The next day after dinner, while I am in my cell like all other prisoners are after 3 p.m. here, a guard brings me a long kite that was unsigned (guards read all kites between prisoners that they pass so he knew the contents). The kite

talked about white supremacy and the need to exterminate, at least render powerless, Blacks, Jews, and other enemies of the white race as the Truth Revolution in this country, and about how the writer and his friends thought I was a righteous brother, but confused as to who the real enemy was. It went on to say that I would be a valuable asset to their group because of my political understanding and speaking ability. It said that the lines were drawn and they had to know where I stood. I was told to give the kite back to the guard who gave it to me, and ask no questions around who it was from. I was also told to reply at that time as to whether or not I was at least interested in further discussion on the matter. A position of leadership was already available to me if I chose to come over, and that privileges were plenty to those in the "Brotherhood" especially if one had rank. At the bottom of the kite as a signature was the eagle over the swastika, and in the middle of the swastika was the numeral four. . . .

My reply was simple and to the point—"I ain't confused at all. Death to the Nazis and their sick cousins the KKK." Since the kite and my reply all has been silent. I have no idea who will hit me or when if I am hit at all. I doubt a hit will

From Elmira Prison

Dear Torch:

Does anyone have any idea of what is taking place in Elmira Prison?

This statement is being written because everyone should know what is happening inside these walls that are called prison, which are in reality a Koncentration Kamp for men that the system has chalked up as dead or places of extreme trials and torture for the real men that are being

held captive.

What is happening behind these walls are premeditated acts of cruel punishment by the administration to the prisoners in an all-out effort to start an insurrection within this institution. The way the lackeys of the administration are daily harassing the men here, you can expect the administration to get what is has been asking for, a major uprising with many deaths in the very near future.

To further make the point, there have been two major incidents in the last two months where many prisoners were assaulted and hurt.

Each time this institution emerges into a riot, the prisoners are put in a Segregated Housing Unit. Upon the prisoner's arrival to this housing unit, they are told to disrobe for a strip-scrutinize. If a correction officer has been physically attacked in the riot, then the prisoners that are taken to this unit are assaulted with night-sticks while they are naked (the odds being 5 to 1).

Then they are put in a cell with nothing on their bare bodies and no sheets, blankets or underclothes. They are kept like this for three to five days. These cells are called the hole and consist only of an iron bed, mattress, toilet and a sink.

Don't you think it's about time you ask the administration why do so many riots take place within this institutional system? And why are so many correctional officers assaulted when they are the ones that carry the night-sticks? Or are they really being assaulted?

We are now earnestly requesting that you the population on the outside act now. Stop the harassment of these people here by any means necessary that you possibly can. Your letters and phone calls to this institution and the authorities that are responsible for the maintenance of this institution could work wonders. We ask that you become involved and support us here and aid us in avoiding a mass amount of bloodshed that is sure to come if things stay this way.

The only sure way things can change without bloodshed is with the public support. Our four major concerns are: 1) Harassment. We want the harassment of the prisoners to stop. 2) Education. We want teachers to attend the institution and teach, not just be on the payroll. 3) Medication. We want doctors that are able to treat the prisoners with adequate medical care. 4) Food. We want food that can provide the nutrition that the body needs, such as protein and vitamins.

We thank you in advance. We also hope that you have the strength to carry out our fight with us.

TBLM & IMJ
Elmira Prison
New York

come especially here in segregation because of the security, but obviously they have a guard on their side so anything can happen. I suspect they haven't the guts to try, but I am not naive so am alert.
Love and Rage,
Carl Harp

Somers prisoner thanks TORCH

Dear Torch:

I am happy with your paper the Torch and it made me aware of situations at other prisons involving prisoners in the struggle.

When I first started receiving the paper I was in the segregation unit (F-Block). I am a member of the Somers Six, however, I'm no longer housed in segregation. I am back in the main population here but there are three more brothers that are still awaiting trial. My disposition was one year to run consecutively to my previous sentence. It was

a cop-out but that's the way it had to be. I'm sorry because I tried so hard to win but they weren't giving up on anything and we didn't have the necessary support. But at this time I would like to congratulate you and your publishers for giving us the support that you gave. Thank you very much.

Please continue to send the Torch for the next five months and thank you once again.

Prisoner of war,
MR
Somers CT

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TO OUR READERS'

Important! Please note that we have a new address for the Torch/La Antorcha and the National Office and New York branch of the RSL. It is:

PO Box 1288
New York, NY 10001

All correspondence should be sent to this address from now on.

If your Torch/La Antorcha arrived a little late this month, don't worry. The RSL held its national educational conference March 29-30 in Detroit, and then the staff had to come back to New York and put out the paper while the transit strike was going on. So we went to press a few days late this month.

NY Transit Workers Fight Contract Sellout

By EUGENE V. LEE

NEW YORK CITY, April 14—After 11 days on strike, 33,000 New York City transit workers were ordered back to work on April 11 with a tentative sellout contract. Their unions, the Transport Workers Union (TWU) and the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), had struck the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and four private bus lines for the first time in 14 years. It was also the first time since the beginning of the New York fiscal crisis in 1975 that municipal workers had fought back with a major strike.

The terms of the sellout are:

Wages: An eight percent increase in the first year of the two-year contract and nine percent in the second; a .4 percent cost-of-living allowance over the last six months that will increase wages about five percent at current rates of inflation.

Givebacks: Elimination of 20 minutes of paid wash-up time; an increase from one year to two and a half years that new workers will be paid less than standard wages; plus other givebacks involving speedup and tightening up of rules on overtime, sick leave and the grievance procedure.

No amnesty: Each transit worker will lose 22 days' pay and the TWU and ATU have been fined \$1 million under New York's Taylor Law. In addition, the judge who imposed the fine is blackmailing the membership to ratify the sellout by withholding a decision on any additional fines until after the vote.

Contract doesn't meet needs

The proposed contract doesn't come close to meeting transit workers' needs. With inflation near 20 percent a year, the proposed wage increase is like being given an Ace bandage for a broken leg. And it doesn't even begin to compensate for the 12 percent in buying power transit workers have lost over the last two years, or the 29 percent lost since the mid-'70s.

Transit workers around Westchester Square in the Bronx agree. "No way," one told us about the contract, "I think most people will vote No."



The proposed settlement, however, is a step up from the total defeat the MTA and New York City Mayor Ed Koch originally aimed for. Before the strike they stood fast on a four percent wage offer and demands for dozens more givebacks. Koch was particularly worried that anything the transit workers won would set a precedent for all the other municipal workers, whose contracts expire this June 30. He therefore wanted to make sure transit workers got stuck with peanuts. "They want to set us up as an example," Arnold Cherry, one of the TWU opposition leaders, told the *Torch/La Antorcha*.

During the strike Koch went up on the Brooklyn Bridge frequently to rally the throngs walking to work. "If this strike goes on long enough," he was heard to say, "we can ultimately win." Koch used these forays to stir up the middle class and divide riders from workers by threatening tax and fare increases.

Rank and file fights sellout

But Koch and the MTA couldn't ram through their "four percent solution." For this the credit must go to the anger and solidarity of rank and file transit workers. Before the strike, they had organized and kept the pressure on TWU President John Lawe for months. On the night the contract ran out, 100 transit workers marched around the hotel where negotiations were being held, chanting, "Don't sell us out!" A half-hour before the deadline, the ATU bus drivers walked out, putting even more pressure on Lawe to call a strike. And when the strike happened, it was solid. Not a single MTA bus or subway moved.

Later in the strike, TWU pickets escalated the struggle by blocking streets and highways in the Bronx and shutting down a commuter bus line. Workers in two non-striking ATU locals refused to drive school buses chartered by big corporations to transport their employees. And on the

last day of the strike, Koch never showed up on the bridge, as militant transit workers from the Good Contract Committee and supporters from other unions and left groups leafletted on the bridge in support of the strike.

It was a different story with the TWU top brass. They pulled out all stops to put down rank and file militancy. They wanted a quiet, ignorant rank and file so they could more easily cook up a sellout with the MTA.

"The union leadership never mobilized the rank and file for anything," one activist told us at the Brooklyn Bridge. "They didn't put out any strike bulletins, or organize any rallies or demonstrations. People didn't know what was happening."

Before the strike, Lawe & Co. circulated a leaflet slandering rank and file militants as "union busters." During the strike, Lawe repeatedly referred to the "strike fever" of his membership as if it were something worse than malaria. On a television interview, he attacked the rank and file militants as "a bunch of drunks," and lashed out at the anti-union capitalist media for stirring up his own membership against a sellout!

But Lawe was not the only one responsible for leaving the anger of the rank and file unorganized. The leadership of the rank and file opposition was in the hands of a loose coalition of at least three groupings. Together they had a 23-22 majority on the TWU executive board at the beginning of the strike. However, this opposition never took responsibility for organizing and leading the workers in a militant strike. Even with a majority on the executive board, there were still no bulletins, rallies or demonstrations. Instead, as one oppositionist told this reporter during the strike, they "united behind Lawe" as the chief negotiator.

In the name of the Good Contract Committee, some of the oppositionists did put out three strike bulletins and organized for the action on the bridge on the last day. But by then it was too late to stop the sellout.

We can see how these forces worked themselves out in the final

negotiations. After a week of following Koch's hang-tough strategy, the MTA began inching toward a compromise. Koch's strategy itself fell apart on the strike's ninth day, when a huge rainstorm and heavy traffic turned midtown-Manhattan streets into a noxious, creeping, horn-honking mess until almost 11 at night. On the same day transit workers in the Bronx, angered by the Taylor Law fines, blocked the streets. And also on the same day, the striking ATU local defied their national leadership and voted to stay out on strike.

That night Koch called Lawe for the first time in the strike and asked him to settle.

With management retreating and Lawe waiting to sign a sellout, the oppositionists still wouldn't take leadership. Instead they too began looking for ways to get out of the strike. By the evening of the tenth day, the top negotiators had worked out a basic framework for the sellout. All that remained were the details and the job of selling it.

On Friday, the eleventh day of the strike, Lawe convened the TWU executive board and ordered a secret ballot on the proposal. The vote was tied. However, the board unanimously agreed to submit it to the rank and file for a vote. Lawe then took it on himself to order people back to work. The oppositionists protested, but made no real fight against it. (They could have moved, for example, to convene a special mass membership meeting to decide whether or not to go back to work pending a vote on the contract.) Later, they promised that they would not resume the strike even if the rank and file voted down the sellout.

Where's Morris?

The interesting question in all this is, where did the opposition majority go? The official story is that one of the oppositionists, Arthur Morris, was away on National Guard duty. However, it later came out that he had an arrangement to go back to New York whenever he was needed. He never went, and publicly refused to explain why. According to the workers at Westchester Square, this was no accident. "I think they all wanted to end the strike," one said.

(*Daily News* columnist Jimmy Breslin later reported that the anger against the sellout among fellow transit workers in Morris' outfit was so high that he had to flee from the camp.)

In spite of the problems with the leadership, there is a good chance that the rank and file will vote down the sellout. That will open up the transit struggle once again. But the strike itself set an example. New York municipal workers showed that they will no longer play dead. The transit strike is bound to increase the chance that the teachers, firefighters, sanitation workers or clericals will walk out come June 30.

"People are tired," one bus mechanic told us. "They know the score. They won't take the same old slog anymore." □



Mayor Koch on Brooklyn Bridge; trying to rally people against TWU.

Oceanside, California

Klan Rally Broken Up by Angry Residents

By ELAINE SCOTT

OCEANSIDE, Calif., March 16—When 30 members of the Ku Klux Klan attempted to rally in this town of some 50,000 people yesterday, local residents and southern California anti-Klan activists, including the Revolutionary Socialist League, turned out to give them the reception they deserved.

In the confrontation that followed, the anti-Klan forces drove back the Klansmen, who attacked the crowd with baseball bats and mace. Several people received minor injuries and one, RSL member Bruce Kala, required over 200 stitches to close wounds to the head.

Crowd shouts down Klan

Despite the fact that its permit to march had been revoked two days earlier, the Klan showed up, as announced, in the Landes Park area of Oceanside at 2 p.m. Dressed in black uniforms, with full riot gear and attack-dogs, the Klansmen marched into the park.

As soon as the Klan appeared, an angry crowd of nearly 200 Black, Latin and

white residents of the area surrounded them. The crowd chanted "Death to the Klan" and shouted other remarks which made it clear that the people of Oceanside did not want the racist Klan marching in their neighborhood. Each time the Klan, using a sound system, tried to speak, the crowd chanted and shouted louder, drowning out the Klansmen entirely. After 30 minutes, the Klan gave up on its attempts to hold a rally.

The Klan then tried to stage a march around the park. But the crowd immediately began to chase the uniformed thugs, pelting the Klansmen with bottles, cans, rocks, pieces of concrete and anything else they could lay their hands on. Unfortunately the Klansmen were able to block most of this, but they got drenched and their spirit was clearly down. As the crowd went into trash bins to get more ammunition, one young militant even threw his bicycle at them.

When the Klan retreated from the park to the sidewalk,

the crowd remained on the Klan's heels. A couple of times the Klan charged into the crowd, swiping the counter-demonstrators with baseball bats, resulting in the injuries. RSLer Bruce Kala was struck eight times, and then kicked while he was down. Those who jumped in to help him, including this reporter, were maced by the Klan.

An important victory

Despite the few injuries among the anti-Klan forces, the day was an important victory for the struggle against the Klan. Oceanside residents—Black, Latin and white—made a clear statement that they will not allow the fascists to spread their racist filth and terror in Oceanside. The Klan is not likely to return to this town in the near future.

Yesterday's events also helped expose the role of the cops in protecting the Klan.



Oceanside protesters chase Klan march in Landes Park.

For the entire time the Klan was in the park, the cops stayed a hundred yards away, simply watching the scene. A reporter later told anti-Klan activists that the cops had said they stayed away "to let the commies and the Klan kill each other." Despite the Klan's attacks on the crowd, no arrests were made. (However, when one of the Klan's attack-dogs jumped a cop, the cops shot and killed the dog, amidst much cheering from the crowd.) Only when the Klan had finally been driven from the park did the cops

form up on the street and chase the Klan—happy to leave at that point anyway—into waiting cars.

RSL provides leadership

The Los Angeles branch of the RSL worked for two months to build a broad, militant anti-Klan mobilization. We worked through the Southern California Anti-Klan Network, urging it to schedule its planned demonstration at

PLP Sectarianism Aids Racists

It's in the actual struggles of the working class that the many different left organizations will prove what they really stand for. In one such struggle, the confrontation with the Ku Klux Klan in Oceanside, California, the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) and its front group, the Committee Against Racism (CAR) gave a good hint of where they really stand.

On March 15, the PLP/CAR forces gathered at Landes Park where the Klan was scheduled to hold a rally later in the day. The RSL had earlier called on PLP/CAR and all other organizations and individuals who wanted to stop the Klan to unite to build the strongest and most effective anti-Klan demonstration possible. PLP and CAR had ignored this call. When the RSL contingent arrived at the park, PLP/CAR was marching down the street. RSL supporters joined this march, picking up the chants of the other marchers. Immediately, the PLP/CAR leadership began to change the chants in an effort to keep the RSL separated from the other marchers. They also began to chant slogans about PLP and CAR, apparently hoping that this would drive RSL supporters away. Following this display of petty sectarianism, the PLP/CAR leadership led the demonstration back to the park. At 1:15 p.m., they declared a victory against the Klan and told everyone to go home.

The decision by the PLP/CAR leadership to tell their supporters to leave at 1:15 p.m. came as quite a surprise. The Klan had announced publicly that they would not arrive at the park until 2 p.m.! Using a bullhorn, an RSL member reported this information to the marchers and repeatedly urged the PLP/CAR people to stay and wait for the Klan. PLP and CAR left anyway. The PLP/CAR leaders had decided that they preferred to let the Klan march unchallenged rather than engage in joint action with another left group. The petty sectarianism the PLP/CAR

leadership had displayed earlier in the day had now become criminal.

Though PLP/CAR has a reputation for doing militant anti-Klan work, it has always followed an extremely sectarian policy, refusing to form united fronts around concrete issues, even when the forces involved have concrete agreement on tactics.

Although PLP is a relatively small organization with little actual influence in the working class, its leaders try to convince its members and supporters that PLP is already the mass revolutionary workers' party in the U.S. To maintain this fantasy, the PLP leadership pretends that all other left organizations are counter-revolutionary, irrelevant or both. There is, therefore, no reason to have united fronts with other groups.

The PLP leadership is also anxious to shield its members from political discussion with other organizations. Like other Stalinist organizations, PLP does not seriously educate its ranks in Marxist theory. This is because 1) it views its rank and file as cannon fodder to put the PLP leadership into power and 2) PLP's politics cannot explain the state of the world today and what should be done about it.

In order to protect its position, the PLP leadership tries to hold PLP together with hysterical independent activity. It will do almost anything to avoid joint work with other leftists where the ranks might be involved in political discussion. This is why in Oceanside on March 15 the PLP leadership preferred to leave the site of the anti-Klan demonstration before the Klan showed up rather than give another group, in this case the RSL, access to their ranks.

Any leadership that puts its narrow organizational interests ahead of building a united and militant action against the Klan, an action in the interest of the entire working class, cannot lead that class to freedom. PLP leaves little room for doubt about where it stands.

Rally for ERA Planned

CHICAGO—The RSL is organizing a contingent to the march for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to be held here May 10. The march is being organized by the National Organization for Women (NOW) and begins at 9:30 a.m. at Columbus and Monroe, behind the Art Institute.

With the ERA only three states away from passage, Illinois has become a major battleground for pro- and anti-ERA forces. Last year the Illinois legislature came very close to passing ERA and now Illinois approval has been named the number one priority by NOW for pro-ERA activists.

The RSL will be marching under the slogan "Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution." For more information, call (312) 226-5915. □

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Struggle Over Tactics Preceded Anti-Klan Actions

the site of the Klan rally. However, due to the role of the National Anti-Racist Organizing Committee (NAROC), this attempt failed (see accompanying article). In addition, we contacted other left organizations to try to get them to join the anti-Klan mobilization.

When we arrived in Oceanside yesterday, teams fanned out through the community, handing out leaflets about the Klan and selling the *Torch/La Antorcha*. We then participated in a Progressive Labor Party/Committee Against Racism march in Landes Park before the Klan arrived (see box).

By the time the Klan did show up, however, only one person from the Freedom Socialist Party and a few San Diego militants and the RSL remained to help organize the Oceanside residents against the Klan. Together we led the chanting and shouts and helped the crowd chase the Klan out of the park.

Later in the day, after Kala's head wounds were closed, a dozen young residents approached us. They wanted to shake our hands—especially Kala's—and were very receptive to the current *Torch/La Antorcha*, which carried the article on the February 2 Greensboro march. Many gave us their names.

The Los Angeles RSL plans to continue to organize among these young militants of Oceanside to build a powerful movement to stop the Klan once and for all. □

The confrontation against the Klan in Landes Park was not the only anti-Klan action in Oceanside on March 15. The Southern California Anti-Klan Network (SCAKN), a newly formed Los Angeles organization initiated and controlled by the National Anti-Racist Organizing Committee (NAROC), had a march at Oceanside's city hall, some six miles from the location of the Klan rally.

Prior to March 15 the RSL led a fight within the SCAKN to hold a demonstration at the site of the Klan rally. We argued that working people in Oceanside could be organized and mobilized in a militant fight against the Klan. NAROC was opposed to this and proposed a peaceful picket line at city hall. Their strategy is to try to attract liberal support, pressure the capitalist government to do something about the Klan and avoid any direct struggle with the Klan forces. In a meeting on March 1 NAROC's reformist strategy won with two-thirds of the votes.

At the following meeting, the RSL introduced a motion to have the city hall demonstration earlier in the day on March 15 so that those who wanted to go to both that demonstration and the action

at the Klan rally could do so. Supporters of NAROC argued against this, saying that they were opposed to confrontation tactics and wanted to prevent people from going to the Landes Park rally. When our motion to have the city hall demo earlier in the day failed by a slim margin, the NAROC forces moved to expel the RSL from SCAKN, supposedly because we have a "confrontationist" point of view, even though the SCAKN had never taken a position against confrontations. Many people spoke against the expulsion of the RSL, including several independents and supporters of the Freedom Socialist Party and the Communist Workers Party. As a result of this, the NAROC people softened their motion to say that if the RSL did not cancel our action against the Klan in Landes Park we would be expelled. This motion passed.

Left wing forms

The RSL went into the SCAKN to build a broad-based and militant movement against the Klan. Starting off as a minority within SCAKN

we gained growing support for our politics and strategy for fighting the Klan. We argued for the SCAKN to be democratically run and allow full expression for all opinions about how to fight the Klan. As a result of our work on the only functioning committee of the organization—the education committee—we won the support of the most active independent people in SCAKN. Since we have a long-term strategy to fight the Klan and would like to win people to it, we wanted to stay inside the SCAKN to keep fighting for our views. This united front approach included participating in the SCAKN action at the Oceanside city hall, as long as we could express our point of view at the demonstration.

However, there were few limits to what NAROC would do to shut out the RSL and its political point of view. First of all, the NAROC leadership vetoed a leaflet passed unanimously by the education committee (including rank and file NAROC supporters) because it explained that the government protects the Klan and stated that the capitalist system is in decay. NAROC claims to agree with these facts—but they are for keeping it a secret. Their method is not to tell workers the truth

and help them become more politically conscious. Instead they work to strengthen people's illusions.

On the evening of March 13, NAROC, through the steering committee they controlled, passed a series of motions limiting the political expression of the left groups participating in the SCAKN demonstration. Specifically, the motions would prevent the RSL from raising our point of view in signs, banners and leaflets.

This was the last straw. All the Independents the RSL had been working with could clearly see that NAROC was a bureaucratic, undemocratic organization that was not interested in building a strong anti-Klan movement but only promoting their right-wing point of view. At this point we decided to go ahead with our plan to meet the Klan at Landes Park.

Concrete test of strategies

What happened on March 15 tested, in practice, the respective approaches of the RSL and NAROC. Only 50 people showed up for the SCAKN demonstration—all from Los Angeles. Meanwhile, over 200, mainly local residents, confronted the Klan at Landes Park. Those anti-Klan militants who followed NAROC's strategy ended up isolated away from the struggle against the Klan. Fortunately the residents of Oceanside showed a greater political understanding than NAROC thought possible.

NAROC covers its opposition to confronting the Klan and its pacifist, reformist approach by contending that they are for educating and organizing people against the danger of the Klan threat. Those who are for confronting the Klan, they argue, are against doing serious organizing and educational work. But the real education and organizing against the Klan in Oceanside on March 15 took place at Landes Park where working class residents drove the Klan out of their neighborhood. Meanwhile, the NAROC-led forces organized and educated themselves at Oceanside's city hall. □

The RSL has a position paper, "Which Way Forward for the Anti-Klan Movement," explaining our strategy to fight the Klan. For a copy, please write to RSL, PO Box 1288, New York, NY 10001.



Bruce Kala, after attack by Klan thugs.

Georgia Sheriff Leads Mob Attack on Black Marchers

For the past few weeks, Wrightsville, Georgia, has been the scene of racist violence, in which white racists, including robed and hooded Klansmen, have attacked Black demonstrators.

For months Black people, led by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), have been holding peaceful protest marches in this small central Georgia town (population 2,100) to protest job discrimination and a lack of political representation.

On Saturday, April 5, at a march to commemorate the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., John Martin, the local SCLC president, was threatened by Wrightsville Police Chief Linton Smith. On Monday, when Martin went to the Johnson County sheriff to get an arrest warrant

against the police chief, Sheriff Attaway arrested both Martin and the Reverend E.J. Wilson.

Tuesday, April 8, about 75 Black demonstrators, protesting the arrests and demanding to meet with the sheriff, were attacked on the courthouse lawn by more than 100 whites. Sheriff Attaway led the attack, his deputies beating people over the head with their clubs. At least nine people were injured. The whites then spent the night riding around Black neighborhoods, shooting into Black people's homes. The next morning the governor sent in the state troopers.

Up to that point the Klan was not involved openly. The racist violence appeared to be local and unorganized. And the sheriff denied any part in it, claiming he was just trying

to keep order. On April 12, a demonstration was called at city hall to protest the racist attacks and demand the ouster of Sheriff Attaway.

The Black marchers were met by a mob of racist whites, including Klansmen brought in from outside the area. Klansmen in robes and hoods handed out Klan membership cards in front of city hall. Many of the whites wore Klan T-shirts and carried Confederate flags. When the 250 Black marchers knelt down to pray, about 75 whites advanced on them. At that point, 100 state troopers stepped in to prevent a confrontation.

The Klan signed up some new members in Wrightsville on April 12. They've probably signed up some more since. This is how the Klan has been growing. It's time to unite to stop the Klan in Georgia and throughout the country! □

Solidarity Actions Planned

Glydons Strike in 10th Week

As we go to press, the workers at Glydons, a Los Angeles garment factory, have been on strike for 10 weeks. The reason they are on strike is simple: They want union recognition. Last December, the workers voted 149-10 to join the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). But the boss went to the National Labor Relations Board with a complaint and was able to have the election invalidated on a technicality. So far, he has refused to negotiate with the workers.

To build up the strength of the strike a three-day Week of Solidarity has been organized for April 16-18. Each day several bus loads of garment

workers from other ILG shops will be coming to Glydons to support the strike.

These mass demonstrations could have a major impact. On March 14, a solidarity demonstration held in front of Glydons was able to force the boss to shut the factory down. The Week of Solidarity rallies are expected to be quite a bit bigger than the March 14 one.

The strikers at Glydons have remained firm—not one has gone back to work. But the boss has now been able to recruit 125 scabs. Despite this, production is low, and all reports say the company is losing money.

To help build the Week of Solidarity, the Comité Revolucionario de la Costura (CRC—Revolutionary Garment Committee, see accompanying article) has issued a special leaflet, which it has distributed at factories and schools in the area.

"The Revolutionary Garment Committee is calling on all workers," the latest CRC leaflet says, **"especially garment workers, and organizations, students and all other progressive forces to join in the Week of Solidarity with the Glydons strike. This is a crucial moment for the Glydons workers. United we can go forward."** □

Revolutionary Organizing in LA Garment Industry

Below we are printing a translated, edited version of a talk given in Spanish to the RSL educational conference held in Detroit March 29-30. The speaker is an RSL supporter who is also one of the Glydons strikers.

We have been organizing in the garment industry for two years. During this time, we have gained certain experience in how to organize. For example, we now have some experience working through the union. All this experience has contributed to bringing us to the point where we now find ourselves.

Through these years we have learned to distinguish the different forces which are taking part in the movement in the garment industry. In Los Angeles a movement to organize undocumented workers is developing, and we feel ourselves, and are, part of this movement. To this point, the Glydons strike has been an important part of our work in the garment industry.

We have been fighting to organize Glydons for six months. We believe that to a considerable degree we have achieved a united front with the union organizers from the beginning of the organizing drive. We've done this without compromising our revolutionary principles. Starting from our analysis that the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), as a

union, is a weapon of the working class, despite the corruption and racism of its sellout leaders, we want to make this union a real tool for the workers which will be used to fight for their liberation. Our strategy is to develop a movement of class conscious workers to take

many months we had been laying the groundwork for the birth of the Revolutionary Garment Committee.

Once the CRC was organized, it was accepted positively by the workers from the moment we carried out our first activity. This was the publication of a leaflet titled "Forward Together," which spoke of the demands we should be fighting for. It pointed out the weapons the bosses use to stop us: the police, La Migra, and the National Labor Relations Board. It posed the organized power of all the workers as the solution that would enable us to emerge victorious. From that moment we established the Revolutionary Garment Committee among the workers and



Torchfile/Lois Amoros

over leadership of their organization.

There are various reasons why we consider the Glydons work to be a very important area of work. Glydons is where the Revolutionary Garment Committee (Comité Revolucionario de la Costura—CRC) was born and began its work. The CRC was born out of the need to offer a truly revolutionary leadership for the organizing drive that was being carried out. It began as an instrument for making the workers more conscious. The CRC was not created by ourselves in isolation. For

within the union itself.

From then until now everything we have done has been aimed at consolidating our forces and getting more and more people to recognize us as a revolutionary force within the union movement. From the beginning we have succeeded in organizing various demonstrations, always surpassing our previous work. All have been received enthusiastically by the strikers. One of these demonstrations was able to close the factory for half a day.

In all the activities we have (Continued on page 17)



Marion strike ends

A strike at the Marion Federal Penitentiary in Illinois closed down the prison factories from March 17 to April 8. It was the longest rebellion in the history of the maximum security prison. Guards in full riot gear and gas masks finally forced everybody back to work. At least 60 men were put in the hole. More reprisals are yet to come.

The immediate cause of the strike was a reduction in the amount of food served at meals, which were awful to begin with. A prisoner wrote to us that three prisoners "found pieces of cut steel in their sandwiches. I have a piece of it." A letter he wrote during the strike said that the prison authorities "claim we don't know what we want, one day over the media. The next day they have a list of things, such as more time for TV, better food, more money for non-industry workers, allowing more use of telephones than once a month, changes of visiting days...."

In fact Warden Harold Miller has lied like hell about the strike demands. For two weeks he claimed he had no knowledge of the prisoners' demands, and was "puzzled" about the cause of the strike. Then he admitted that he had rejected the prisoners' demands three days after the strike began.

The fundamental reason for the Marion strike is that the whole place is rotten. Marion is for punishment; it doesn't even pretend to rehabilitate anyone. It was built in 1963 to replace Alcatraz, and is the one U.S. prison to accept prisoners from all over—the federal system, various state prisons, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Prisoners who the keepers think might cause them trouble are shipped to Marion, where they are treated like dogs and isolated from any support.

Defend the FALN militants

As part of a crackdown on the Puerto Rican independence movement, police arrested 11 Puerto Rican militants in Evanston, Illinois, on April 4. The five women and six men are suspected members of the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional (FALN—Armed Forces of National Liberation), a clandestine group engaged in armed struggle for the liberation of Puerto Rico. The group is accused of more than 100 bombings in a number of U.S. cities.

One of those arrested, Carlos Torres, is on the FBI's "10 most wanted" list. The FBI claims he is responsible for a number of armed attacks, including the 1975 bombing of Fraunces Tavern in New York. Torres' wife, Maria Haydee, will be sent to New York to face a murder charge in connection with an explosion at the Mobil Oil Company building last August 3. The others were indicted on April 14 in Chicago on various charges of armed robbery and violence. A Chicago judge set the outrageous bail of \$2 million for each of the prisoners. The government claims such high bail is necessary because FALN members are terrorists.

The prisoners are demanding to be tried by an international tribunal because they don't recognize the right of any U.S. court to judge their actions. They are putting their political beliefs into practice by refusing to take part in the pre-trial proceedings. The cops had to carry them into court for arraignment on April 7. The militants won't even tell the cops their names.

Hines conviction overturned

The Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals threw out the rape conviction of Tommy Lee Hines on March 19. Hines, a mentally retarded Black man, was framed for raping a white woman in Decatur, Alabama, and sentenced to 30 years in prison in October 1978. The main evidence against him was an alleged "confession" which the Appeals Court ruled invalid. The Decatur district attorney, who had earlier said he would retry the case if Hines' conviction was reversed, refused to comment on the Appeals Court decision.

The Ku Klux Klan has tried to use the Hines case to whip up racist sentiment in Alabama. On May 26, 1979, Klansmen opened fire on Black demonstrators protesting the Hines trial. Two Black people and two Klansmen were wounded in the resulting shootout.

—AL & PB

The following written by a pro Texas Department of Corrections. The brother the last five years months in segre

Sprawled in the Coastal Plains Texas lies the Department of Corrections. Dispersed over counties, and in the city of Houston comprises 17 security units, with (where so-called criminals" and sentenced to die being the most the maximum tem.

Prisoners sleep on the floor

Each prisoner is comodate approximately 1,000 prisoners prisoner population—the largest in TDC is overcrowded, with those prisoners within three es-verted facilities deathrow and over 10 percent prisoners assigned sleep on mattress floor of three-millionally designed one. System-wide percent of the have three prisoners to them. And sleep on the floor in the penal inst other states.

Those prisoners be the third man overcrowded cell



Demonstrators against prison

are promptly "disobeying a committee, and solitary confinement. paradoxically, many prefer the relative "privacy" of solitary to the notwithstanding they are denied their property, excluded material.

The prisoner population TDC doubled from 1978, and disciplinary actions increased by

The following article was written by a prisoner in the Texas Department of Corrections. The brother has spent the last five years and four months in segregation.

Sprawled in the rural Gulf Coastal Plains of eastern Texas lies the Texas Department of Corrections (TDC). Dispersed over eight Texas counties, and headquartered in the city of Huntsville, TDC comprises 17 maximum security units, with the Ellis Unit (where so-called "hardened criminals" and prisoners sentenced to die are confined) being the most "secured" of the maximum security system.

Prisoners sleep on the floor

Each prison was built to accommodate approximately 1,000 prisoners. But with a prisoner population of 26,832—the largest in the U.S.—TDC is overcrowded. Moreover, with the exception of those prisoners confined within three especially converted facilities at Ellis for deathrow and segregation, over 10 percent of the 2,567 prisoners assigned to Ellis sleep on mattresses on the floor of three-man cells originally designed to house one. System-wide, roughly 25 percent of the one-man cells have three prisoners assigned to them. And more prisoners sleep on the floor in TDC than in the penal institutions of 27 other states.

Those prisoners refusing to be the third man in an already overcrowded cell housing two

TDC: A Time Bomb



TDC prisoners are forced to work without pay under slave conditions.

in that same period. Essentially, the higher the population rate, the more repressive become the dehumanizing methods of control. When recently reminded that overcrowding was one of the conditions blamed for the New Mexico prisoners' riot, TDC Director W.J. Estelle said that, although he wouldn't rule out the possibility of a riot occurring in Texas, it was his opinion that Texas prisoners were "more mature" and had the perspicacity to recognize the "futility" of the New Mexico riot. In a similar vein, Billy C. "Axhandle Mac" McMillan, demoted assistant director and now warden at Ellis, piped in that he too did not rule out the possibility of

in 1790, prison officials have been zealous in their single objective of reducing men and women to animals. Thus it is important that TDC officials condition Texans to be firm believers in the 13th Amendment to the U.S. constitution—"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime... shall exist within the United States..." (emphasis added)—for it acts as the "patriotic" lever to poison the atmosphere of reform on the one hand, while numbing the senses to the savagery of prison reality on the other.

Capitalist slave labor

Historically, persons confined in the Texas penal system have been forced to perform capitalist slave labor similar to that of the slaves of pre-Reconstruction time. Significantly, TDC is self-sustaining, one of the few prisons operating in the black, and has as its base a small industrial and cash crop economy. Neither inflation nor recession has hampered TDC's productive growth. In fact, unlike other prison systems whose labor force is mainly idle, TDC's productive growth rate has risen so steadily, 'til more and more it has mechanized its agricultural production and shifted a greater portion of its slave labor forces to the production of industrial goods.

In many ways, TDC has instituted profit-making methods for draining human energies with mechanical exactness. It bleeds society in general during its yearly begging ritual before the Texas legislature for the appropriation of more and more funding. TDC has recently added a cost-of-living demand to offset inflation. On the other hand, TDC does not compensate its prisoners for the

labor mandatorily demanded of them (the Texas legislature recently passed a prisoner-wages bill, but they placed it under the discretionary power of the director, which was like not having a bill at all). TDC dips directly into the purses of prisoners' families, friends, etc., since all commissary items, which are sold at retail prices, can only be purchased by the prisoners, which means that all funds to be spent must be deposited in TDC's Inmate Trust Fund Account. Moreover, from the voluntary participation of its slaves in the annual (five Sundays) October prison rodeo, TDC realizes in excess of \$500,000 per year on the well-publicized pretension that the rodeo profits are spent on "prisoner rehabilitation."

On a larger and far more profitable scale, TDC has gained a monopolistic hold, nationally, over diverse penal industries by drastically underbidding other state institutions and filling more lucrative contracts away in its bulging portfolio. Where prisoners of other state institutions have shut down their prison industries in their demands for better safety conditions and higher wages for the labor compelled of them, TDC has ambitiously come to the res-

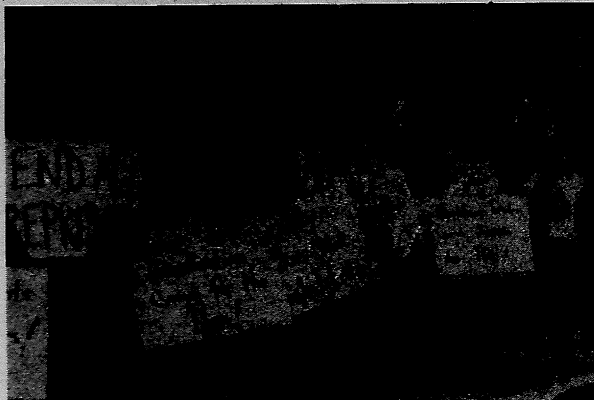
cue of most besieged penal administrators and low-bid-dingly resolved their labor problems by wresting for itself another profitable contract. In this way, TDC transforms its non-wage-earning slave labor force into involuntary scabs in its absorption of contracts from other "troubled" prison industries. TDC is emerging yearly as one of the most profitable enterprises (on a small-scale, of course) under capitalist economy, and its books are free from state audits.

Calm is misleading

TDC has long been hailed as the "model" institution every prison administrator would aspire to head. Many prisoners' (not too unlike the majority of the citizenry of Texas) consciousness level is direfully low, and they accept the scarring lash of their total dehumanization in muted silence. Moreover, TDC has officially instituted the most elaborate, early warning snitch system in the nation, and its inmate collaborators are not only condoned as an "unofficial" guard system, but they are fully sanctioned, protected, and roam unrestrainedly within the prison of their assignment. The inmate collaborators, infamously known as "building-tenders," are relegated to a privileged class higher than the slaves they lord it over.

But the calm of TDC is misleading, and stability under fascist relations is a surface phenomenon at best. TDC is headed for a social meltdown because, basically, its authoritarian repressiveness is the profound negation of human rights. There is little doubt that the enslaved men (whom TDC has ever treated as "little moronic boys") and women of TDC will one day rise and break the chains that shackle them in inhumane degradation. The only reasonable question to pose is: When? When Slaves? When will we collectively rise and struggle fundamentally against our state-imposed oppression and regain our humanity?

26 February 1980
Comrade Awall



Demonstrators support TDC prisoners who went to court against prison administration.

are promptly charged with "disobeying an order," whisked before a disciplinary committee, and given 15 days solitary confinement. Paradoxically, many prisoners prefer the relative tranquility and "privacy" of solitary confinement to the treble-celling, notwithstanding the fact that they are denied their personal property, excluding writing material.

The prisoner population of TDC doubled from 1968 to 1978, and disciplinary infractions increased by 600 percent

a riot, but he tended more to view the improbability of a riot at Ellis because, due to his "open door policy" with inmate collaborators, the few prisoners capable of instigating a riotous situation were known to the officialdom and had either been compromised or securely locked down. Anyway, "the leaders ain't got no sense," McMillan added.

The prison system embodies the naked power and most brutal policies of the state, and, since Philadelphia opened its Walnut Street jail

Help Fight TDC

As we have seen, the prisoners and others at TDC are being treated like slaves. The Texas Department of Corrections is a profit-making enterprise. Every year, the Texas legislature appropriates millions of dollars to TDC in order to keep the state's prisons running. The money is used to pay the wages of the Texas Department of Corrections, to the state of Texas, and to the state of Texas. At least \$500,000 per year is spent on the rodeo profits. If you haven't already, write a letter and write to Ronald D. Taylor, Assistant Director for Treatment, Texas Department of Corrections, Huntsville, TX 77249. Let him know what you think of TDC's robbery of the Torch/La Antorcha.

VIETNAM

Economic Failures Cause Shake-Ups

By PAUL BENJAMIN

Five years after the victory of the liberation struggle against U.S. imperialism, a deep economic and political crisis is rocking Vietnam.

The Vietnamese economy is in a shambles. In 1978, it grew by only two percent, instead of the 15 percent called for in the 1976-80 Five Year Plan. Prices of basic consumer goods have doubled in the past 18 months. Three million workers are unemployed.

Economic problems are particularly severe in the countryside. The Vietnamese government set a target of producing 16 million tons of food in 1978. Instead, agricultural production declined from 13 million tons in 1977 to 11 million tons in 1978. Moreover, the 1979 spring harvest produced little improvement, reaching only 78 percent of its production quota.

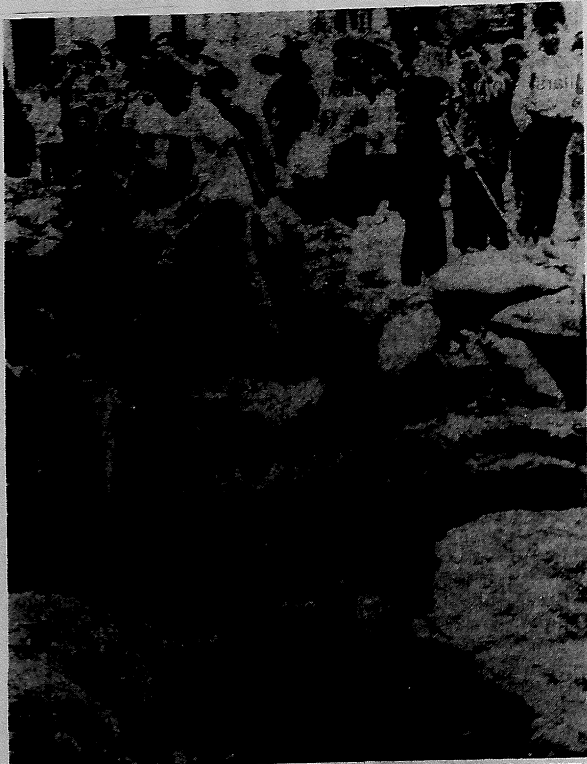
As a result of continuing agricultural failures, the food ration in Vietnam has dropped every year since 1975. According to Dr. Ton That Tung, a Vietnamese medical expert: "A whole generation will bear the stigmata all their lives. The Vietnamese people do not have enough to eat."

Industrial production is suffering as well. Overall, the growth rate in industry dropped from 12.6 percent in 1976 to seven percent in 1978. Factories have been forced to close down because of lack of raw materials. In addition, according to the government paper *Nhan Dan*, labor productivity is declining because "machinery and equipment has been only half-utilized and works for an average of only four or five hours a day" as a result of "despotic bureaucracy and a lack of a sense of responsibility."

Finally, the country has piled up a huge international debt. The Vietnamese regime owes 1.1 billion dollars to the Japanese government and lending agencies such as the Asia Development Bank and the World Bank. It can get the foreign exchange it needs to pay off these debts only by increasing exports and maintaining a favorable balance in international trade. But in 1979, Vietnam had a \$555 million trade deficit.

U.S. imperialism devastated country

Several factors have combined to bring about this crisis. First, U.S. imperialism destroyed much of the country's resources in its effort to prop up its puppets in South



Vietnamese citizens dig trenches in Hanoi following 1979 Chinese invasion of Vietnam.

Vietnam against the Vietnamese national liberation movement. For instance, U.S. bombers wrecked 70 percent of the factories in North Vietnam between 1965 and 1973. In South Vietnam, U.S. planes and artillery dropped an average of almost 500 pounds of explosives per acre. Four million acres of farmland were defoliated with poisonous chemicals. About 1.5 million acres of cropland were also bulldozed or poisoned.

Second, the Chinese state-capitalist ruling class, now allied with U.S. imperialism, has done its part to weaken the Vietnamese economy. To try to prevent the emergence of a strong Vietnamese state, which would threaten China's traditional dominance of Southeast Asia as well as

increase Russian influence in the area, the Chinese government has gradually cut off all its aid to Vietnam. This aid included a half million tons of food annually and about 70 technical and industrial aid projects. It struck an even more devastating blow when it invaded Vietnam in 1979 and left its northern provinces in ruins.

Viet rulers launch brutal policies

In addition to these attacks, the brutal policies of the Vietnamese ruling class itself have played a fundamental role in causing the economic crisis in Vietnam. In particular, its efforts to carry through

a state-capitalist transformation of South Vietnam's economy and to make Vietnam the dominant power throughout Southeast Asia are imposing a heavy burden on the already exhausted Vietnamese workers and peasants.

The National Liberation Front (NLF), which led the liberation struggle in the south, was controlled by middle class nationalists in the Stalinist Vietnamese Communist Party. They won the support of the peasants by promising them national independence, freedom and land. Based on the peasants' support and the assistance of North Vietnam, the NLF drove U.S. imperialism and its puppets out of Vietnam in 1975. In 1976, they and their colleagues in the North Vietnamese government united the two halves of Vietnam into a single country.

Following this, the unified Vietnamese government launched a ruthless campaign to bring production and trade in the south under direct government control. This was the first step in setting up a full-fledged state-capitalist economy in the southern part of the country. The main element in this campaign was the creation of "New Economic Zones" in the poor mountain regions of Vietnam and in the areas most devastated by the war. The government wants to force over 10 million people—one out of every five Vietnamese—to leave their homes and settle in these zones by 1986. Many of them are shopkeepers and unemployed workers from the cities who have no farming experience. By forcing the population to labor on ruined or unproductive land and paying them minimal prices for their crops, the ruling class hopes to accumulate sufficient capital to reconstruct the country on a state-capitalist basis.

The main victims of the rulers' economic policies have been the peasants of southern

Vietnam, who bore the brunt of the liberation struggle. Instead of distributing the property of rich landlords to landless and land-poor peasants, the government forced peasants to join "cooperative farms" and to sell their crops to the government at low prices. To ensure government control over food production, roadblocks were set up to prevent peasants who owned their own land from bringing their surplus crops into the cities. At the same time, the regime began an intense propaganda campaign against the peasants as "representatives of small-scale individualistic production which had become bankrupt." (*Nhan Dan*, August 2, 1978.)

This coercive approach, far from solving the crisis in agriculture, actually made it much worse. Specifically, it led to a decline in agricultural production. Under present arrangements, the peasants in the south have no motive for growing large crops since the government pays them so little. Rather than exert themselves, the peasants are either growing just enough for their own consumption, or feeding any surplus they produce to their livestock. In September 1979, an article in *Nhan Dan* admitted that food production in the south was only 50 percent of the production quota in 1976, less in 1977, and "far below last year's level" in 1978.

The attack on the peasants was accompanied by a sharp crackdown on urban shopkeepers. In March 1978, the government began a campaign against "bourgeois trade," shutting down 30,000 shops in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) and replacing them with "socialist trade centers." The object of this campaign was to institute state control over all trade, at the expense of the merchants, and in particular to deny the peasants any hope of finding independent markets for their crops. But the campaign resulted only in wrecking the traditional economy in Vietnam and spurring the growth of a flourishing black market in Ho Chi Minh City.

Imperialist ambitions drain economy

A second major drain on the economy has been the imperialist activities of the Vietnamese ruling class. In December 1978, the Vietnamese ruling class invaded neighboring Kampuchea. Some 120,000 troops occupied the country, overthrowing the Pol Pot regime, and installing the



Vietnamese refugees at sea. Over 300,000 "boat people" have fled Vietnam.

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Crisis leads to purge

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no bore the brunt of the struggle. In distributing the property to landlords and land-poor peasants, the government forced peasants to sell their crops to the government at low prices to ensure government food production. The peasants were set up to be exploited by the government. The peasants who owned the land and brought their crops into the market at the same time, the government launched a campaign against the peasants. The government's representatives are individualistic and have become a major drain on the economy.

The government's approach, far from solving the crisis in agriculture, made it much worse. Specifically, it led to a decline in agricultural production. The present agricultural policy is based on the present agricultural policy. The peasants have no motive for producing crops since the government pays them so little that they can't even cover their costs, let alone exert themselves. The peasants are either not working or working just enough for their subsistence, or feeding their families. The government's policy is to produce as little as possible. In September 1978, the government's attack on food production was only 50 percent of the production in 1976, less in 1977, and below last year's level in 1978.

The government's attack on the peasants is accompanied by a sharp decline in urban shop production. In March 1978, the government began a campaign against "bourgeois" shops, cutting down 30,000 shops in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) and replacing them with "socialist trade shops." The object of this was to institute government control over all trade, at the expense of the merchants, and in particular to deny the peasants any hope of finding markets for their products. The campaign is a major drain on the economy in Vietnam, spurring the growth of a black market in Minh City.

Capitalist ambitions in the economy

The major drain on the economy has been the activities of the Vietnamese ruling class. In December 1978, the Vietnamese class invaded neighboring Kampuchea. Some troops occupied the area, overthrowing the Pol Pot regime, and installing the

puppet Heng Samrin government in its place. The Vietnamese rulers have also reduced Laos to a client state occupied by 50,000 Vietnamese troops. These occupying armies must be fed, clothed and equipped.

To maintain this empire the Vietnamese government has created an enormous military machine, including an army of over one million troops, that drains an enormous amount of human and material resources out of the economy. In 1978, the government cut capital expenditures for factories and equipment 30 percent in order to beef up the army. In addition, various factories have been shifted from civilian to military purposes. For instance, the Mai Dong engineering works has switched from producing metal presses to making shovels which are urgently needed to dig trenches.

Above all, the regime has been forced to use its single greatest resource—its laboring population—for military needs. Hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants have been drafted. Those who remain at work must devote hours to drill and building defense works. The army itself, which previously played an economic role through landclearing projects, is now totally involved in the subjugation of Kampuchea and the occupation of Laos.

Finally, the Vietnamese regime's attack against Vietnamese citizens of Chinese ancestry has wrecked key sections of the economy. Since 1978 the government has brutally expelled over 200,000 people of Chinese background from Vietnam. Among them were 15 percent of the mine workers in northern Vietnam, as well as thousands of dock workers and fishermen. As a result, coal production and the fishing catch both declined in 1978, while there were long delays in loading and unloading ships because of a shortage in skilled labor.

Crisis leads to purge

The economic crisis hitting the country has forced the ruling class to drastically revise its economic strategy. In September 1979, the government introduced regulations allowing individual farmers to cultivate unused land and "enjoy the harvest in full." Families will also be allowed to cultivate reclaimed or virgin land for three to five years without having to pay taxes. At the same time, the government announced it would remove the checkpoints designed to prevent individual peasants from marketing their crops.

Earlier, the government gave up its efforts to institute direct state control over com-

merce and trade. In August 1979, the government decided to encourage family-sized businesses to resume trade, promising that they could sell their goods at prices "decided by the buyers and sellers." It also ordered the state bank to provide loans to such businesses "to ensure an increase in the production of commodities."

In addition to these measures, the Vietnamese ruling class is taking a series of political measures to consolidate its rule. It is first of all instituting a massive purge of the Vietnamese Communist Party. For the first time, it is issuing membership cards to its cadre—but hundreds of thousands of veteran cadre are being denied cards. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, two-thirds of the party's 1.5 million members will be replaced by the party's fifth congress in 1981.

The main victims of this purge are the peasant militants who were the backbone of the liberation struggle. In the September 1979 issue of the magazine *Tap Chi Cong San*, under the pen-name Trung Thanh, politburo member Le Duc Tho argued that the veteran cadres are no longer able to lead the country because of age or because they lack scientific, technical, military or managerial skills. He called on them to retire in favor of younger cadres and those with scientific and technical training.

This purge is in line with the general policy the ruling class has followed ever since it took power. The Vietnamese rulers used the peasants as a battering ram to seize political power. Once in power, they turned on them and tried to squeeze them economically. Now they are driving the peasants out of the party because they have no further use for them. In the meantime, they are filling the party ranks with technicians, military personnel, and professional bureaucrats who have no ties to the masses and will have no hesitations about enforcing the ruling class's campaign against them.

Second, they are increasingly turning to the Russian state-

capitalist ruling class and its Eastern European clients to prop up the Vietnamese economy and support the regime's foreign policy. In December 1978 the Vietnamese government signed a defense pact with Russia. In July 1979, it joined Comecon, the Eastern European trade bloc. The regime has borrowed 1.4 billion dollars from the Comecon countries—and relies on them for wheat shipments to make up for declining food production.

This turn to Russia, along with the economic reversals and the purge of the party, has provoked a major factional battle within the top ranks of the Vietnamese leadership. Last July Hoang Van Hoan, a long-time leader of the party, defected to China and accused party secretary Le Duan of responsibility for the break with China. He also accused him of constructing a "fascist regime" within Vietnam itself. Following Hoang Van Hoan's defection a number of party officials, including General Chu Van Tan, Le Quang Ba, head of the minorities commission, Ly Ban, deputy trade minister, and Tran Dinh Tri, secretary of the National Assembly standing committee, were stripped of their posts and placed under house arrest.

Recent reports indicate additional purges are coming. The February 15 issue of *Far Eastern Economic Review* reports that a number of top ministers, including the ministers of defense, transport, agriculture and the interior, as well as the head of the state planning commission, will shortly be replaced.

We don't know the precise reasons behind this most recent shakeup, that is, whether it represents a purge of pro-China elements, a struggle over economic policy, a search for scapegoats for the regime's economic failures or a combination of these. The one thing that is clear is that the Vietnamese Communist Party, which enjoyed an internal stability lasting 35 years, is being turned upside down in the wake of the ruling class's economic crisis and foreign policy dilemmas. □



WORLD IN REVOLUTION

West Indians battle cops in Britain

On April 2, a police raid on a West Indian bar in Bristol, England, sparked a rebellion against the racist harassment of the city's West Indian community. It started when the cops broke into the Black and White Cafe, arrested its owner, and clubbed patrons of the bar. Hundreds of young West Indians went into the streets and began throwing everything they could find at the cops. When the cops brought in hundreds of reinforcements and began using dogs against the youths, the whole community—West Indians, Asians and whites—turned out. They drove the cops out of the neighborhood, destroying nine police cars and sending 21 cops to the hospital. Then the whole crowd celebrated their victory by setting fire to a bank and post office, and helping themselves to food, clothing and other merchandise from stores in the area.

Hundreds of thousands of West Indians have taken advantage of their British Commonwealth citizenship to emigrate to Great Britain in search of work. Once they arrive, they are forced into the worst-paying jobs, or can find no jobs at all in Britain's declining economy. The fascist National Front whips up racist hysteria against them among white workers and shopkeepers frightened by rising unemployment and crime. The Thatcher government itself exploits these fears by swearing to tighten immigration laws and expel "illegal immigrants."

West Indian youth people in particular are bearing the brunt of these attacks. For instance, in Bristol's West Indian community, two-thirds of the youth have no jobs. They have been forced into the streets because the police close down the clubs where they go to relax, have a few drinks and smoke some ganja (marijuana). So it's hardly surprising that young West Indians are rebelling. When reporters asked one youth why the bank was burnt down, he replied: "The bank is for the moneyman. The majority of us are unemployed. We are on the dole. The bank represents the Margaret Thatcher government. We burnt it down. We'd like to burn her down as well!" Another declared: "You go to school, you learn and then... nothing. The color of your skin determines everything. We can't beat them in the courts, but we defeated them in the streets."

It's particularly fitting that the latest rebellion took place in Bristol. In the eighteenth century Bristol was the center of Britain's slave trade. The day after the rebellion, one West Indian jubilantly told reporters: "All the Black slaves who built Bristol were jangling around in their graves last night."

Tyrant Tolbert toppled in Liberia

Non-commissioned officers led by Sergeant Samuel K. Doe killed Liberia's dictatorial President William R. Tolbert on April 12 and set up a 15-member military-civilian government. It appears that Doe and his supporters acted in alliance with the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP), which was organized in January. In March, PPP leaders demanded Tolbert's resignation and called for a general strike. The government reacted by banning the PPP, jailing several of its leaders, and offering rewards for the capture, "dead or alive," of 20 others. One of Doe's first actions was to free the PPP leaders. Four have taken posts in his government.

Liberia has a long history of dictatorship and collusion with U.S. imperialism. In 1822, the U.S. set up a colony of freed slaves in what was then called the Grain Coast. This colony declared itself the Republic of Liberia in 1847. Since then, descendants of the colonists have ruthlessly exploited the African population of the country. Although less than five percent of the population, they exercise total control over the country.

Since World War I, Liberian rulers have turned the country into a paradise for U.S. imperialism. In particular, the Firestone Rubber Company, which controls over a million acres of rubber plantations, dominates the economy. Other U.S. firms control the country's iron, diamond and bauxite mines. As a result of this looting, the per capita annual income in Liberia is only \$237, despite the country's considerable natural resources.

Doe is already moving to win U.S. support for his regime. He has pledged to protect private property and foreign investment in Liberia. Moreover, the chief U.S. military advisor in Liberia, Colonel Robert Gosny, is working with the government to keep the army in line and make sure popular rejoicing at Tolbert's fall doesn't develop into a rebellion against imperialist control.

—PB

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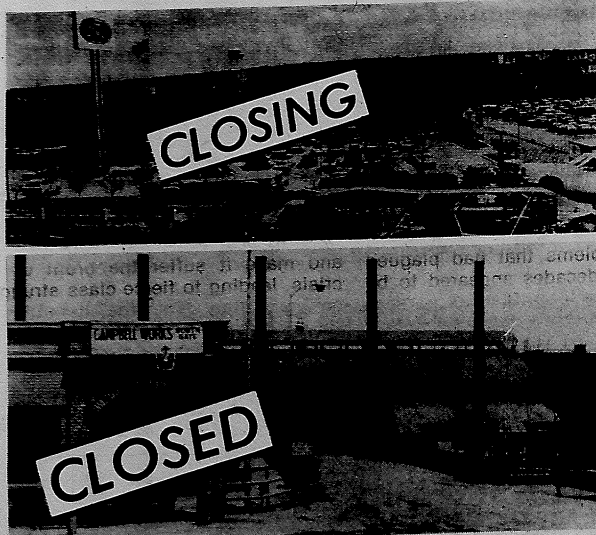


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Recession is paralyzing basic industry and leaving thousands without jobs. Clockwise from bottom left: Youngstown Steel Campbell Works, Youngstown, Ohio; Ford Mahwah plant in New Jersey; Uniroyal plant in Detroit; thousands on line for job applications in Michigan.

RECESSION ARRIVES; DEPRESSION ON THE WAY?

(Continued from page 1)

for March is 6.2 percent of the workforce, slightly higher than in February. This increase was particularly significant because much of it was due to layoffs among adult men, who are usually the most highly employed group, have the most seniority, and make up the majority of workers in heavy industry. In the past, an increase in adult male unemployment has been an early sign of recession.

"We're in for a deep global recession," someone identified only as "one of the government's leading international economists" told the *Wall Street Journal* April 1.

Even Treasury Secretary G. William Miller had to publicly concede on April 5 that the recession had started and that it could be "a little more severe" than the Carter administration had predicted.

In fact, the recession could possibly be the most severe downturn since the 1974-75 recession, which in turn was the worst crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Moreover, a full-fledged depression cannot be ruled out.

Explosion of debt

The current recession has been a long time coming. The main reason for its delay is that the recovery from the 1974-75 recession was artificially extended by a tremendous expansion of consumer spending paid for by a virtual explosion of debt.

In December 1978 we wrote that this mushrooming debt—the biggest in U.S. history—created the illusion of a growing economy. We compared the way the U.S. econ-

omy was relying on debt to someone drinking to avoid a hangover: It avoids the hangover for a time but makes it worse when it comes. In the year and a half since that writing, the debt "drinking" has continued at an ever increasing rate.

This in turn has pushed inflation to record levels for this century. Expanding credit is like pumping money into the system. If the production of real goods doesn't increase to the same degree, the result is more money chasing relatively fewer goods. This cheapens the value of money, which means that each dollar can buy fewer goods. This is another way of saying that prices go up—i.e., inflation. Now, this type of credit-induced inflation has a tendency to feed on itself, that is, to get totally out of control.

Here's how this has worked in the recent period. As prices have gone up, workers' wages and the incomes of other classes have declined in purchasing power. By the first two months of this year, wages trailed prices by so much that the average worker's purchasing power dropped 1.4 percent in one month alone, the equivalent of 17 percent over the year.

In an attempt to beat inflation, many people have taken money out of their savings accounts and spent it. Since interest rates on savings accounts have been far lower than the rate of inflation, it has made sense to stop trying to save money and instead to spend it while it can still buy something.

Even more important, workers and other people have been using credit cards and other forms of credit to buy things today before prices shoot out of sight tomorrow. Personal debt now averages

23 percent of after-tax income, much above what was considered to be the safe limit of around 19 percent. Meanwhile, total consumer debt (not counting mortgages) is now a whopping \$308.7 billion.

But working people aren't the only ones who have been going into debt. The capitalists have been borrowing on a large scale as well. Those companies whose products are in demand are borrowing to cover the purchase of raw materials (the prices of which are going up), as well as to expand and/or modernize their operations. Those companies that are doing poorly are borrowing to try to improve their health, or merely hang on in the present inflationary situation.

Today, as a result of this borrowing, the corporations have, on average, cash on hand to cover only 42 percent of their short-term debts. This is the lowest cash-to-short-term-debt ratio since 1975.

Industry falling apart

This expansion of debt—both personal and corporate—wouldn't be much of a problem (at least not right now) if the economy were basically healthy. But it's not. The industries, factories, plants and other structures that are the foundation of the capitalist economy are falling apart and are becoming less productive, not more so.

The steel industry is old and inefficient. The auto industry is in a state of near collapse, along with industries such as rubber and glass that are dependent on it. The railroads and the highways are old and decrepit. According to the Or-

ganization for Economic Cooperation and Development, U.S. productivity (goods produced compared to labor put in) has actually declined 1 percent in the last seven years.

We can get an idea of what the present situation is by looking at a mythical company. When, say, the Armstrong Steel Company sells a 30-year bond at nine percent interest, it is figuring it will make and sell enough steel each year to pay the nine percent, make a profit and put enough money away to pay the face value of the bond when it matures.

But what if it doesn't make enough money one year? It will probably borrow money somehow to make its payments (perhaps from a bank that owns Armstrong Steel stock and doesn't want it to fall in price). The bank that lends Armstrong Steel money is figuring (hoping) that in the next years, Armstrong Steel will make enough to pay the bondholders, make payments on the new loan, and make a profit.

Now three sets of people—Armstrong stockowners, bondholders and the bank—are holding pieces of paper that supposedly will be paid off by Armstrong Steel producing a lot of steel and making a substantial profit. These are all claims against future production. If, in fact, Armstrong is able to expand production, all these debts can be paid off. But if Armstrong Steel lets its mills, etc., decay, it won't be able to pay off its debts. Its debt will eventually build up until Armstrong Steel goes bankrupt or is taken over by another company.

Today the U.S. economy is like Armstrong Steel. It is in debt to the future; there are

billions and billions of dollars worth of pieces of paper around that are claims against future production that will never exist. (These claims are called fictitious capital.) The debt has mushroomed, fueling inflation which in turn has increased the debt, which has fueled inflation, etc., etc. Sooner or later the whole situation will collapse and a depression will occur.

Credit crunch developing

Right now, this collapse could be triggered by a credit squeeze, which is when credit becomes so expensive or totally unavailable that people and institutions can't borrow. To try to make money in an inflationary situation, lenders such as banks jack up interest rates on the money they lend, so as to stay above the inflation rate. Eventually, loans become so expensive (or there isn't any money at all), that individuals and corporations can't borrow. This leads to a crash. Unable to borrow, individuals and corporations can't pay off their existing debts, which means the people and corporations they owe money to can't pay off their debts, etc. Defaults on loan repayments then spread like a chain reaction throughout the economy, leading to a collapse of the entire credit structure and an economic crisis.

This type of credit crunch is developing right now. The prime interest rate, the rate charged by banks for short-term loans to the very largest corporations, is now at 20 percent, the highest in this century. Smaller businesses pay above the prime rate, up to around 24 percent. As a result, many small businesses have not been able to afford the new interest rates and have stopped borrowing. Home mortgages are now difficult to obtain and extremely expensive when avail-

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Barry Commoner, the noted environmental scientist, has gained a wide audience in recent years for his studies of the causes of, and solutions to, the energy and environmental crises. Commoner's views, put forward in a series of books—*The Closing Circle* (published in 1971), *The Poverty of Power* (1974) and *The Politics of Energy* (1979)—deserve closer attention for two reasons.

First, Commoner has made valuable contributions to an understanding of why the world is in such a mess today. In particular, he has studied the relationship between science and technology on the one side, and the economic and political structures of society on the other. Commoner has shown that the energy crisis, the ecology crisis, and the economic problems of inflation and stagnation are all interrelated.

For example, he writes: "The progressive depletion of the supplies of these energy sources [oil, coal, and other non-renewable energy sources—WG] . . . intensifies inflation; it reduces the standard of living, but of the poor more than others; it hinders new industrial investment and aggravates unemployment. . . . The end result is a serious threat of economic depression." (*The Politics of Energy*, p. 30.)

Commoner has convincingly argued that the crisis is not simply "economic"—it is total. According to Commoner we are facing the collapse of civilization as we know it.

" . . . The present course of environmental degradation . . . is so serious that, if continued, it will destroy the capability of the environment to support a reasonably civilized human society." (*The Closing Circle*, 1974 edition, p. 215. All further references to this book will be from the 1974 edition.) In the same book Commoner estimates that " . . . the point of no return—the time at which major ecological degradation might become irreparable . . . might be from twenty to fifty years. . ." (p. 230). In this context, Commoner believes that if we are to survive, we must completely reorganize the way in which human beings relate to the environment.

Thus Commoner's analyses have proved to be far more relevant to an understanding of the current crisis than have those of any of the schools of bourgeois economics—liberal or conservative—or, for that matter, much of what passes for Marxism.

The second reason why it is worth looking at Commoner's views has to do with his arrival on the U.S. political scene as a figure of some importance. Last year Commoner helped found the Citizens Party and is now its presidential candidate. This gives him a potentially powerful platform from which to argue for his solutions to the crisis of the society.

Commoner himself believes that the crisis is fundamentally caused by the very nature of society—that is, by capitalism. He believes that some sort of socialist reorganization of society is necessary. However, far from pursuing the question of how this will have to be brought about, Commoner retreats from his own insights.

Commoner's Citizens Party is not socialist. Rather it stands for a state-

controlled, supposedly benevolent capitalism. Its model is one in which profit is still the driving force and the means of production are held privately from those who work them. "There is nothing wrong with profit, or with private ownership. What is wrong is when private interest, and not the public good, determines how we live. . . . Elevating the national interest above vested private interests is the heart of what the Citizens Party is about." (From a working paper of the Citizens Committee, which launched the Citizens Party. Emphasis in the original. Reprinted in *In These Times*, August 22-28, 1979, p.

economic recovery that followed the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II. That recovery—known as the post-war boom—lasted roughly from 1946 until the end of the 1960s.

The post-war boom brought high profits for the capitalists and relatively high wages for many workers, particularly those in the more advanced capitalist countries. It appeared that there might be a whole epoch, if not eons, of capitalist prosperity. The economic problems that had plagued the world for decades appeared to be solved, or at least solvable. In particular, the rapid development of technol-

sectors. The declining rate of profit would ultimately lead to a contraction of the production process. The competition among the different blocs of capital would become increasingly ruthless as each sought to improve its position. The biggest capitalist powers would try to carve and recarve the world among themselves, a struggle that would eventually lead to world war. At the same time, the capitalists would seek to beat down the working class and make it suffer the brunt of the crisis, leading to fierce class struggles and revolutions. Thus the alternative for the epoch was, as Engels put it, "socialism or barbarism."

In fact, despite the surface appearance, the post-war prosperity did not disprove this analysis. The basis of the boom was laid by the wholesale destruction caused by the world war. The major Western powers—Germany, France and Britain—as well as what had been the dominant power in Asia—Japan—and Russia were all devastated by the war. The U.S., on the other hand, emerged from World War II as the number one imperialist power. Its ruling class was able to reorganize and centralize the world economy to its own benefit. It helped rebuild Western Europe and Japan, restarting their destroyed economies. And, using state intervention based on deficit financing, foreign investments, unequal trade, and the reorganized international monetary system, the U.S. ruling class leached off both Europe and the oppressed "Third World." In this way, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall was compensated for by the mass of profits which the U.S. capitalists accumulated. The looted wealth was then used to buy off the upper layers of the U.S. working class, ushering in a period of relative labor peace.

All this laid the basis for a temporary period of prosperity. But it could not reverse the decay of capitalism. The system had not solved its inability to produce enough profits to keep going. Instead, a great deal of the profits were paper. Mountains of debt were piled up by the government, corporations and individuals. These debts were treated as real capital, but were actually claims on future production. Meanwhile, the industrial infrastructure in the U.S. decayed. The debt grew faster than did production of real goods with real value. The system was borrowing from the future—and would be unable to pay when the bill was presented. The result is today's inflation and stagnation—and tomorrow's depression.

Barry Commoner's major contribution has been to elaborate the Marxist analysis of the post-war period. In particular, he has examined the role and costs of the new technology utilized after World War II. This technology resulted in the creation of scores of new products and new methods that were introduced into the production process. Synthetic fibers replaced wool and cotton. Artificial fertilizers replaced manure and crop rotation. Synthetic detergents replaced soaps. Aluminum, plastics and concrete replaced steel and wood. Truck freight replaced railroads. Non-returnable bottles replaced returnable bottles. High-powered auto en-

(Continued on next page)

Energy, Environment and the Economic Crisis

The Contributions and Contradictions of Barry Commoner

By WAYNE GARDNER

15.) The Citizens Party hopes to become the bearer of the "national interest" by "contesting for political power," in other words, by running in elections.

This perspective rejects the logical conclusion that Commoner's own analysis leads to: that the current crisis is the result of built-in contradictions of the capitalist system; and the only solution is the overthrow of that system—that is, through the socialist revolution. Thus, while putting forward a valuable critique of capitalism, Commoner chooses the hopeless road of trying to reform it. As we will show, this is the contradiction of Barry Commoner.

Basis of post-war boom

Commoner predicted much of the current crisis; *The Closing Circle*, for example, was written in 1971, before most people recognized an "energy crisis" or economic "stagflation." He predicted the current decline of capitalist society (and the disaster that awaits us at the bottom) because he had correctly analyzed the basis of the

ogy—plastics, pesticides, automation, nuclear energy, etc.—held out the promise of ending scarcity and the need for back-breaking labor. (This beautiful picture, not surprisingly, left out the poverty and oppression of many within the U.S., the misery of the majority of people in the less developed countries—in Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa—and the constant threat of a nuclear World War III.)

The recovery seemed to refute those who had predicted the end of capitalist society, particularly the Marxists. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels had predicted the decline of capitalism as early as 1848; some 70 years later, V.I. Lenin declared that, beginning around the turn of the century, the world had entered the epoch of imperialism, of "parasitic, decaying capitalism." In the 1930s, when world capitalism was experiencing its deepest crisis, Leon Trotsky graphically labelled it the "death agony of capitalism."

Fundamental to a Marxist analysis of the epoch was the belief that the capitalist system could no longer expand on a global basis without resorting to increased plundering. Growth in one sector would increasingly come only at the expense of other

(Continued from previous page)

gines replaced low-powered ones. Chemical insecticides and herbicides replaced older methods of controlling crop pests and weeds. There was a vast expansion of the use of petroleum oil for fuel and for making plastics. There was a big increase in the use of electricity and the start of a civilian nuclear industry.

Commoner has shown, however, that these technological developments did not really raise the standard of living of the working class. To take but one example, artificial fibers are not warmer than wool and, in many cases, provide less warmth. Commoner's research found that "... per capita production of goods to meet major human needs—food, clothing, and shelter—have not increased significantly between 1946 and 1968..." (The Closing Circle, p. 136.) But compared with the Great Depression and the war, people's living conditions seemed greatly improved. The expansion of production in those post-war years looked very impressive. Would-be Marxists, such as Ernest Mandel, labeled this "neo-capitalism" and hailed the "Third Industrial Revolution."

Commoner exposes the true nature of the expansion of production in the post-war period. Just like the growth of the debt, this growth of production involved a borrowing from the future. There were certain hidden costs, Commoner



Barry Commoner and LaDonna Harris, presidential and vice-presidential nominees of the Citizens Party. The campaign gives him a potentially powerful platform from which to argue for his solutions to the crisis of the society.

shows, that were not being paid for, but which certainly would have to be paid for over any period of time. Commoner divides these uncounted costs into two main categories: **pollution and the loss of non-renewable energy resources.**

Uncounted costs: pollution . . .

"... Most pollution problems made their first appearance, or became very much worse, in the years following



Farmer killing cattle poisoned by PBB, a pesticide made from new molecules based on chains of carbon atoms, molecules which are not found in nature. Plants and animals are not adapted to them; they therefore act as deadly poisons which cannot be destroyed.

World War II," Commoner notes in *The Closing Circle* (p. 125). Some, such as Paul Ehrlich, author of *The Population Bomb*, blame this on the "population explosion," claiming that there are "too many people." Others say that people consume "too much," that the working class lives too well. Commoner answers that the growth of pollution has increased many times faster than the

are not adapted to them; they do not fit in the self-correcting balance of nature. They injure living processes, but living processes cannot break them down.

Other materials that have a similar impact are present in nature, but not to the large extent that production has recently spewed them into the biological environment. This is true, for example, of mercury, but especially of radioactive materials: uranium, plutonium, and radium. Living beings are not adapted to such large quantities of these substances, which therefore act as deadly poisons that cannot be countered or destroyed. Moreover, the period of time it takes for these materials to be broken down naturally is in many cases literally tens of thousands of years.

"The overall evidence seems clear. The chief reason for the environmental crisis that has engulfed the United States in recent years is the sweeping transformation of productive technology since World War II." (The Closing Circle, p. 175.)

. . . And waste of non-renewable energy sources

Energy is the other main area of hidden costs that Commoner examines. The "sweeping transformation of productive technology" required a lot of energy. Many aspects of the post-war prosperity were especially wasteful of energy. For example, the growth of the suburbs and highways (both federally subsidized) led to a reliance on gas-guzzling cars and trucks instead of more energy-efficient railroads, trolleys, and other forms of mass transportation.

The main sources of energy were all non-renewable. There is only a limited supply of petroleum, natural gas, coal, and uranium on earth. They are being used up at an increasingly rapid rate and will soon be depleted.

Yet the problem is bigger than that. At first, industry uses the oil, coal, etc., that is easiest to find, easiest to get at, and easiest to refine. The result appears to be cheap energy which in turn appears to boost profits. Over time, however, this easiest material is used up. At this point, the more hidden, deeper, and poorer-quality material has to be pumped or mined. It then becomes more costly to get the same amount of fuel. For example, it takes more labor time and more capital to mine the same amount of coal as

before. This time the result is increasingly expensive energy, causing costs to zoom and lowering the rate of profit. In other words, high profits due to cheap fuel at one time lead to low profits due to more expensive fuel later.

Capitalists didn't pay the costs

The boom after the war had other uncounted costs in terms of pollution and energy that Commoner examines. Nuclear energy, for example, was supposed to provide cheap, non-polluting energy. However, the capitalists did not add on the long-term costs of storing deadly wastes for 90,000 years! In general, the capitalists did not subtract from their profits the costs of poisoning the air, land, and water; they did not tell the workers that high wages included high rates of cancer. They "should" have been paying for pollution control; for conserving scarce resources; for locating and working new sources of these scarce resources; and for the eventual transition to a non-polluting technology based on renewable energy sources (such as solar power). But they did not pay these necessary costs. "... Industrial pollution tends to destroy the very 'biological capital' that the ecosystem provides



Gas lines last summer. There is a real shortage of oil. The oil monopolies faked an immediate "oil shortage" deal with the long range difficulties of getting oil, coal

and on which production depends. The productive system as a whole "borrows" from the ecosystem, incurs the "debt to nature" through pollution..." (The Closing Circle, pp. 265 and 270.)

According to Commoner, "borrowing" from nature hid the fact that the system was failing to produce enough profits to keep itself healthy out the boom. "... The rate of profit has been falling. Despite periodic recoveries, the overall trend since World War II is clearly downward. The decline has accelerated since 1970. According to [then Treasury Secretary] William Simon, the fundamental reason is that the rate of profit has been falling. This long-term decline is not well known within the business community because it has been concealed by accounting measures—but a misuse of technology." (The Closing Circle, pp. 246 and 248.)

This borrowing from the future in order to maintain present prosperity cannot go on indefinitely. At a certain point the falling rate of profit makes itself felt. The crisis comes home to roost. Pollution is bad that it can no longer be hidden. Working people become aware that they are being killed by their jobs (miners with Black Lung, construction workers suffering from silicosis and other diseases). Many people, as well as industrial workers, notice that they are being pushed into the middle of prosperity. They become aware that dirty air and water increase the costs of living. Suddenly there is an "energy crisis."

In the same way, the capitalists become aware that it is costing them more to get energy. The crisis demonstrates that the "energy crisis" is not a fake, as many liberals claim. While there is no immediate crisis of oil, it is becoming more difficult to get it. The result is a real shortage of capital needed to get the energy. "... The least in the energy sector is a shortage of capital." (The Closing Circle, p. 260.) Similarly, there is a great deal of coal, but coal is becoming more difficult to get. Also, because coal is very polluting, it requires more capital to burn it cleanly. More capital is needed to build and run reactors. As this capital shortage, the crisis lies faked an immediate "oil

and on which production depends. . . . The productive system as a whole 'borrows' from the ecosystem and incurs the 'debt to nature' represented by pollution. . . ." (The Closing Circle, pp. 265 and 270.)

According to Commoner, this "borrowing" from nature hid the fact that the system was failing to produce enough profits to keep itself healthy all throughout the boom. ". . . The rate of profit has been falling. Despite periodic fluctuations, the overall trend since World War II is clearly downward, and the decline has accelerated since 1966. . . . According to [then Treasury Secretary William] Simon, the fundamental fact that the rate of profit has been in a long-term decline is not well known, even within the business community, because it has been concealed" by accounting measures—but also by the misuse of technology. (The Poverty of Power, pp. 246 and 248.)

This borrowing from the future in order to maintain prosperity in the present cannot go on indefinitely. At a certain point the falling rate of profit makes itself felt. The chickens come home to roost. Pollution becomes so bad that it can no longer be ignored. Working people become aware that they are being killed by their jobs (such as miners with Black Lung or construction workers suffering from asbestiosis and other diseases). Middle class people, as well as industrial workers, notice that they are being poisoned in the middle of prosperity. The capitalists become aware that dirty air and water increase the costs of production. Suddenly there is an "environmental crisis."

In the same way, the capitalists become aware that it is costing more and more to get energy. Commoner demonstrates that the "energy crisis" is not a fake, as many liberals claim. While there is no immediate shortage of oil, it is becoming more expensive to get it. The result is a real shortage of capital needed to get the oil. ". . . At least in the energy sector there is a shortage of capital." (The Poverty of Power, p. 260.) Similarly, the U.S. has a great deal of coal, but coal requires a lot of capital to mine. Also, because coal is very polluting, it requires even more capital to burn it cleanly. Meanwhile the costs of building and running nuclear reactors continues to rise. As a result of this capital shortage, the oil monopolies faked an immediate "oil shortage"

in order to raise profits to be able to deal with the long range difficulties of getting oil, coal, and nuclear energy at higher costs.

So long as the artificially induced prosperity lasted, it served—and to some extent still serves—to maintain the class peace that followed World War II. When the capitalists were making high profits, they were not driven to attack the workers in a direct way. When the workers believed they were getting high wages (ignoring pollution on the job and in the general environment), they didn't tend to be for revolution. Thus the borrowing from the future served to dampen the class struggle. Commoner calls this ". . . the temporary cushioning effect of the 'debt to nature' represented by environmental degradation on the conflict between entrepreneur and wage earner, which, as it now reaches its limits, may reveal this conflict in full force." (The Closing Circle, p. 276.) When the system can no longer ignore pollution and rising energy costs, the "cushion" between the classes deflates. Today there is ". . . a veritable chorus emanating from the business community calling for reduced consumption." (The Poverty of Power, p. 250.) No longer able to hide the fact that their profits are shrinking, the capitalists seek to raise profits by launching a frontal attack on the working class—paying less in wages and public services—with the goal of boosting the rate of exploitation. The cost of postponing the class struggle comes due; intense class war breaks out.

Alternative to crisis is socialist revolution

As this discussion should suggest, Commoner agrees with the Marxist tenet that the fundamental cause of the current crisis is capitalism. Technology and economy do not exist in a vacuum; they cannot exist divorced from the natural environment; and they are aspects of the social system as a whole. Changes in any given area will necessarily affect every other area. For example, a decision to produce new technology affects the economy, the environment, politics, etc. Yet the society, affecting everyone, is run by the small number of those people with private property in the means of produc-

tion. They compete with each other, exploit the workers, accumulate and maximize profits, and don't give a damn about the consequences for society and nature. After discussing the falling rate of profit, Commoner writes: ". . . The basic ideas I have discussed in this chapter are among those first put forward by Karl Marx. . . . The U.S. economic system has. . . in fact precisely the economic faults that Marx attributed to capitalism," faults that have been masked by destruction of the en-

to be distributed over the whole country in the way best adapted to its own development. . . . The present poisoning of the air, water, and land can be put an end to only by the fusion of town and country." (Frederick Engels, Anti-Duhring, written in 1877-78.) The classless, stateless, cooperative society of free communism would liberate the greatest productive power of all, that of the free, all-rounded person.

Commoner's work points to the need to replace capitalism with socialism. By



Pollution has become so bad that it can no longer be ignored. Working people, such as miners suffering from Black Lung (above) are being killed by their jobs.

vironment. (The Poverty of Power, pp. 252 and 259.)

The only alternative to decaying capitalism—in which the entire world and its peoples are the personal plundering ground of a tiny handful—is socialism. To revolutionary socialists, socialism can only mean the struggle to overcome poverty, want, oppression and exploitation—the conditions produced by relative scarcity—through the cooperative efforts of the producers themselves. The workers and their anti-capitalist allies throughout society will have to smash the old capitalist state and replace it with the rule of democratically elected committees. They will have to take over the banks, factories, mines, transport and communications systems, and all aspects of the economy, and subordinate them to their own control. The driving force of socialist society would be the fulfilling of human need, not accumulation for the sake of accumulation.

Socialist society would struggle to be in harmony with nature. Polluting techniques would be controlled or banned, to be replaced by non-polluting methods (farmers who use modern organic fertilizers and pest controls are as productive as those using chemicals). Commoner estimates that it would be possible to change to complete reliance on solar energy over a transition period of 50 years. (Under the general heading of "solar energy," Commoner includes wind, water power, and biologically-generated liquid and gaseous fuels.)

A society in harmony with nature would do away with the bureaucratic-military state, corporate monopolies and monstrous cities. Precisely because it would be democratically planned, it could be more decentralized, communal, and regional. "Only a society which makes it possible for its productive forces to dovetail harmoniously into each other on the basis of one single vast plan can allow industry

his own evidence, capitalism is moving toward the destruction of civilization by pollution and waste of resources (not to mention the danger of nuclear war). The answer should be socialism.

But to Commoner, socialism is what we know to be state capitalism; that is, the centralization of the means of production in the hands of the state, with that state being controlled by a class other than the proletariat. That Commoner believes state capitalism to be socialism is clear from his analysis of the Soviet Union. Russian industry, he knows, is just as polluting and just as wasteful as is U.S. industry—including its extensive use of nuclear power. ". . . The modern technologies of the Soviet Union appear to be as counterecological as those introduced into the United States economy. . . . The drive for 'plan fulfillment,' like the profit-motivated drive for productivity in the United States private enterprise system, takes its toll on the ecosystem." (The Closing Circle, pp. 278-79.)

Russia (and all the other so-called socialist countries) suffers from the same overall crisis—economic, ecological and of energy—as do the traditional capitalist countries. Seeing this—and acknowledging that Russia lacks "economic democracy"—Commoner still calls Russia "socialist." This is apparently because of its government ownership. He writes, ". . . the [Russian] socialist system may have an advantage over the private enterprise system. . . ." (The Closing Circle, p. 280.)

But through his Citizens Party Commoner is not even proposing to replace traditional capitalism with state capitalism. Instead, he proposes to keep traditional capitalism—somewhat improved. In his latest book, he advocates keeping the energy industry under private ownership with government regulation. ". . . For the continued production of oil

(Continued on next page)

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result is increasing, causing costs the rate of profit. profits due to lead to low expensive fuel later.

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war had other forms of pollution moner examines. example, was cheap, non-polluting, the capitalists long-term costs of or 90,000 years! talists did not fits the costs of and water; they that high wages of cancer. They ing for pollution scarce resourc working new resources; and ition to a non-based on renew (such as solar not pay these Industrial pollu e very biological system provides



Commoner. There is a real shortage of capital needed to get oil. As a result, monopolies faked an immediate "oil shortage" in order to raise profits to be able to deal with the long range difficulties of getting oil, coal, and nuclear energy at higher costs.

(Continued from previous page)

and especially of natural gas during the solar transition, the companies... would have to be given the status of public utilities... guaranteed a fixed rate of return on their investment." (The Politics of Energy, p. 74.) In the same book he advocates state subsidies for private solar businesses: "Public funds could be used for the initial purchase needed to establish new, competitive solar industries..." (p. 77)

Commoner even appeals directly to the capitalists in the energy-using industries, such as auto and steel. He claims that a transition to solar energy would be in "...the interests of the entrepreneurs and managers of industry generally." (p. 69) This is after he has proven that the problem is not one group of greedy businesspeople, but the whole capitalist system, which cannot maintain profitable production without destroying the environment.

In the same *Politics of Energy*, he writes that the "root problem" is that "...the energy system, like the production system as a whole, is essential to national welfare, but is governed by private rather than social interests." (p. 76) Yet he wants to maintain private ownership of the energy industry as well as of the production system as a whole!

Apparently Commoner believes that social control of the economy could be carried out by using the present-day capitalist state. A mixture of government regulation of private enterprises plus government ownership in some areas, he claims, would provide "...a strategy of social governance..." (The Politics of Energy, p. 76.) But this militarized, bureaucratic state has, and can have, no other purpose than to serve capitalism.

Barry Commoner does not agree with the need for a fight on the part of

the workers and other oppressed people against the capitalists. His Citizens Party appeals to everyone, to all "citizens," including the "entrepreneurs and managers." But the capitalist class is blindly caught in its own system. It will not and cannot stop destroying the world until we destroy it.

The present crisis is an interrelated set of partial crises—in the fields of energy, of ecology, and of the economy—which is basically a single crisis of the entire social system—capitalism. The solution to this crisis is neither state ownership nor state regulation of private businesses. The solution is to take power away from the managers, bureaucrats, and businesspeople, so that the working class runs society. With workers' councils, cooperatives, and communes, working people must associate to manage our common affairs. In a cooperative society, we will have no interest in

destroying our own environment. In the words of Engels:

"If the whole of modern society is not to perish, a revolution in the mode of production and distribution must take place, a revolution which will put an end to all class distinctions." (Anti-Duhring) Only the working class of all lands has the potential ability to break out of this dying system and build the new, classless world.

The revolutionary confrontation between the working class and capitalist class was postponed after World War II, partly by the capitalists' "borrowing" from nature. Commoner has demonstrated that this borrowing has reached its limits. The confrontation is now approaching. The outcome will be either the destruction of civilization or socialist revolution. Commoner, by placing himself in opposition to socialist revolution, ultimately chooses the very destruction he has worked to expose. □

Radiation Dangers Remain One Year After Three Mile Island "Accident"

By ADELE LOHMAN

One year after the near-disaster at Three Mile Island (TMI) the nuclear accident is far from over. The danger of another accident at the nuclear reactor site, as well as the threat of radioactive leaks into the environment, will continue to exist until the damaged Unit Two reactor is dismantled. Metropolitan Edison (Met Ed), the company that owns the plant, says Unit Two won't be dismantled before 1985 because the cleanup will take that long.

In the past few months there have been several reported leaks of radioactive Krypton gas from the damaged reactor. According to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), there is nothing

to worry about. Radiation levels were too low to cause any harm, they said. Now, as part of the cleanup operation, Met Ed wants to vent all of the Krypton gas that has accumulated in the dome of the containment building. The NRC's experts claim such low-level radiation is harmless, just like they claim that the radiation that escaped during last year's accident didn't hurt anyone.

They are lying. In the first place, radiation effects are cumulative; the sum of repeated small exposures becomes equal to one large exposure. In the second place they don't know if radiation from the accident hurt anyone; it may take 20 to 30 years before the effects show up in the form of cancer and birth defects.

TMI people take on gov't and company

The two million people who live within 50 miles of TMI are sick and tired of living in fear for their health and their children's health. And they are sick of the lies they are being fed by the government and the nuclear industry.

On March 19, when the NRC held hearings on venting the Krypton gas, 500 people packed the fire hall in Middletown, Pennsylvania, a few miles downstream from TMI. They shouted "liar" and "murderer" at Met Ed and NRC staffers. One woman punched a radiation expert who declared that venting the gas wouldn't cause any harm to human beings.

On March 28, the anniversary of the TMI accident, there were demonstrations all over



Technicians wearing protective clothing check radiation level in TMI Unit Two reactor.

the country. At a candlelight vigil in Middletown, local residents denounced Met Ed and the NRC. Some people in the town are talking about sabotage. Civic leaders from the area told the NRC in Washington that if the gas is vented fear of radiation might drive thousands of people to violence.

Met Ed priority: restart reactor

Met Ed claims they have to vent Krypton gas so workers can get into the containment building to start the cleanup. That's another lie. Venting is not the only method of removing the Krypton gas. But at \$75,000 it's the cheapest. Other methods could cost up to \$160 million and might take several years. Both the utility and the government say any

delay in the cleanup increases the danger to the workers inside, as well as to people living near the plant. However, according to Robert C. Arnold, the Met Ed executive in charge of the cleanup, the company's priorities are: 1) to ensure the safety of the damaged Unit Two; 2) restart Unit One; and 3) clean up Unit Two—in that order. In other words, they want to get the plant back into operation and the cleanup can wait.

There is no guarantee that they can ensure the safety of Unit Two. The containment building is flooded under seven feet of water, which is corroding the equipment. The fans that cool the building have been running for a year without maintenance in a building that has 100 percent humidity. If the fans go, the rise in temperature would increase the air pressure inside, resulting in a major leak of Krypton gas. The instru-

ments that control the water chemistry could also fail, and this could cause the radioactive core to heat up again. Or the primary cooling system could start leaking.

The experts can't agree about whether there's enough heat in the core to make it dangerous. Some scientists say fission could start again and cause another accident worse than last year's. Meanwhile, there is only one instrument left that indicates the state of the core. If that fails, nobody will be able to tell what it's doing. In order to get to the core, 600,000 gallons of contaminated water will have to be pumped out, filtered and then trucked across the country to a disposal site in Hanford, Washington. The job is supposed to take a year. But first the necessary filtering equipment has to be designed and built.

No new safety procedures adopted

The fact is, nobody knows how to clean up this mess. The capitalists built these nuclear plants and never commissioned any studies on what to do in case of an accident. They thought it couldn't happen. After it did happen, the government appointed commissions to study Three Mile Island. And they came up with a whitewash. They said the fact that there was no meltdown proves that all the safety devices work. The president's commission made certain safety recommendations, not one of which has so far been passed by Congress. □

JUST OUT!

REFORM OR REVOLUTION? KEY QUESTION FOR THE LEFT

By Tom Paine

This new pamphlet, based on reprints from the *Torch/La Antorcha*, takes up key questions of strategy for the revolutionary left. Order from: RSL, PO Box 1225, New York, NY 10001.

U.S.

By a STEEL CORRESPONDENT

CHICAGO—The Occupational Health Administration brought the Union to trial and serious" Occupational Health Act of 1970 that U.S. Steel endangered the workers by forcing them from explosions in nance and the process (BO) South Works cago's south

The explosion are caused with typically 2,400 water. The

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U.S. Steel Charged With Safety Violations

By a STEELWORKER
CORRESPONDENT

CHICAGO—On March 17, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) brought the U.S. Steel Corporation to trial here for "willing and serious" violations of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. OSHA has charged that U.S. Steel knowingly endangered the lives of its workers by failing to protect them from the danger of explosions in the blast furnace and the basic oxygen process (BOP) shop of the South Works facility on Chicago's southside.

The explosions referred to are caused when molten metal (typically 2,400F degrees) hits water. The water turns to

as eight blocks from the plant.

This is not the first time U.S. Steel's South Works has been cited by OSHA. In 1978 OSHA fined U.S. Steel \$215,000 for over 100 violations OSHA inspectors found on a routine inspection. This was the largest single group of citations ever issued by OSHA. (The fine is on appeal and has never been paid.)

In the current proceedings, U.S. Steel can be fined only \$10,000 if found guilty, but the charge of a "willing and

to be convicted of ludicrous stupidity and incompetency if it can thereby avoid a conviction on criminal charges for having acted "willingly and knowingly."

Workers who testify harassed

The company is now trying to make up for its weak case in court by harassing on the job any workers who testify. Lisa Shea, a worker at the South Works BOP shop who was subpoenaed during the first week of the trial, is one such worker. When she testifies (probably when the trial resumes May 17), she will be questioned about an incident that occurred in March 1979.

At that time, Shea refused to operate machinery necessary for pouring iron because standing water was under the pouring area. Instead, she cited section 14C of the steel contract which gives workers the right to refuse unsafe jobs.

On the final day of the first week of the trial, Shea was confronted at work with a similar situation. This was an apparent attempt on the part of U.S. Steel to test her will and possibly trap her into inconsistent behavior that would discredit her testimony at the trial. In the early morning of March 21, Shea was asked to operate the machinery that would position a ladle full of molten iron for pouring into a mixer. Because there were puddles of water under the mixer, she refused. She pointed to the danger of an explosion should there be a spill, and again cited section 14C as well as the OSHA provision on the right to refuse an unsafe job that was recently upheld by the Supreme Court.

In response, the general foreman called Shea insubordinate and sent her home. Contrary to usual procedure, plant guards did not escort her to the gate. Instead Shea had to walk alone over half a mile through the mill grounds at 4:00 a.m. Deserted sections of the steel mills have been the scene of several rapes in past years.

To help defend herself against this harassment, Shea spoke that same day to the safety and health person at the union local, and notified OSHA of the incident. OSHA then made an unannounced inspection of the BOP shop. While the water under the mixer had been cleaned up,

the OSHA inspectors found water, oil and grease under the mixer scales and fined U.S. Steel \$10,400.

Enraged by the "insubordination" of this woman worker, U.S. Steel intensified its campaign to get Shea. Two days later, there was a fire on the mixer and Shea was framed-up to take the blame for it. She was suspended for four days.

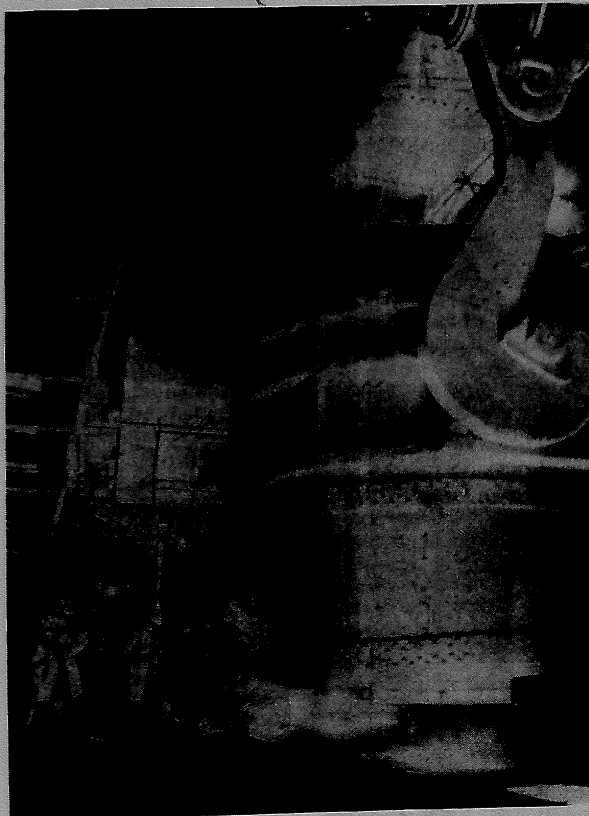
Then on April 11, Shea was suspended again. After entering the plant she found the way to the BOP shop blocked by a train. Rather than be late in relieving the afternoon worker, she walked out of the plant and re-entered at a gate with a bridge over the railroad tracks.

For leaving the plant after already taking a time card, Shea was suspended the night of April 11 and for five additional days. Three union griev-

ance people represented her at an April 12 hearing and argued without success the Catch-22 of the situation: If Shea had waited for the train, she would have been suspended for being late.

Lisa Shea has now been kept from working and has lost pay for nine and a half days in the three weeks since the OSHA trial opened.

The company clearly wants to threaten workers with their jobs if they demand the right to protect their lives. In response to this, and in response to Lisa Shea and other militants standing up to the bosses, the union local at South Works, Local 65 of the United Steelworkers, has been increasing its activity around health and safety issues. Each division is now electing a union safety inspector. The union women's committee is active as well. Most of the workers being harassed for refusing unsafe jobs are women. Many women steelworkers have been hit by recent layoffs, and the company is trying to fire the few women who are left by claiming they are unable to work the jobs. □



Ladle containing molten steel. Spills from ladles like this can cause serious explosions.

steam instantly, the steam is trapped momentarily by the heavy iron, and then bursts out with tremendous force. The explosions can splatter hot liquid metal onto anyone in the area and can throw hot metal and slag as far as 150 yards.

There have been many injuries and deaths from such explosions in past years. For example, on February 16, 1979, four workers were killed and 18 injured at the Burnside Steel Foundry in Chicago when molten steel hit water in the pouring pit. The noise and vibration from some of the explosions at South Works have been heard and felt as far

serious" violation of the act lays the basis for criminal charges to be brought against the company later.

The first week of hearings took place from March 19 to 21. An OSHA expert from Pittsburgh testified, as did workers from the blast furnace. OSHA believes they have forced the company onto the defensive and that U.S. Steel has been reduced merely to trying to stall the verdict. The company argues that molten metal does not produce an explosion when it contacts water—a completely silly contention that everyone involved knows is not true. Apparently U.S. Steel prefers

USWA Pact Settled

The United Steelworkers of America (USWA) and the nine largest steel companies have signed a new three-year contract, covering 290,000 workers. The contract was approved on April 15 by a 333-42 vote of basic steel local union presidents. The USWA membership does not have the right to vote on their contracts.

The new agreement calls for increases in the base hourly wage of 25 cents the first year, 20 cents the second, and 15 cents the third. The formula for figuring cost-of-living increases remains unchanged.

The cost-of-living increase of 32 cents an hour due this May 1, however, will not be paid. Instead, the money will be used to raise pensions of already retired steelworkers.

There were some minor improvements in work rules in the agreement. The rights of acting foremen were somewhat restricted, and work shoes will now be paid for by the companies. Vacations were lengthened for higher seniority workers.

One important issue that was not resolved was whether the Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA) will be continued for the 1983 contract round. Under the ENA, the USWA gives up the right to strike and agrees that all issues not resolved in contract talks go to binding arbitration. In return, the workers get a guaranteed three percent yearly increase, cost-of-living hikes, and a \$150 lump sum bonus at the beginning of the contract.

In addition, the contract says nothing about what should be the number one issue: job security. For example, Youngstown, Ohio, has lost 10,000 steel jobs since 1977 due to mill shutdowns. Parts of dozens of other steel mills have been closed, such as the foundry at U.S. Steel's South Works. Tens of thousands of steelworkers are now on long-term "temporary" layoff and thousands more are working four-day weeks.

At the same time many of the cushions that steelworkers have used to get by during layoffs are gone. Workers at U.S. Steel's huge Gary Works report that the credit union has stopped making loans, and that Indiana's Trade Readjustment Act fund, which supplied extra unemployment benefits, is out of money as of April 30.

Despite all this, the USWA tops did not seriously negotiate over any measure to stop the layoffs.

EDITORIALS

No to the Olympic boycott

The cut-throat competition between the U.S. and Russian imperialists that has dominated the world scene in recent months has also proven to be the main basis of controversy over the upcoming Olympic Games in Moscow. The latest move in the game is the big right-wing campaign being led by the U.S. government to boycott the Olympics in retaliation for the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. The U.S. has already announced its withdrawal and State Department officials are boasting that many major Western European countries will support the boycott.

Obviously, the independence of Afghanistan means very little to the U.S. imperialists. They have seized the opportunity provided by the Russian invasion to pose them-

selves as defenders of "freedom." Their real aim is to drum up public support for a stepped-up military campaign. They hope a successful boycott, that is supported on U.S. terms, will show that it is still the top notch of all imperialist powers.

Politics and sports

The debate over the upcoming Olympics has brought out the hidden political competition that has always been a part of sports. In capitalist society, the domination of the ruling class is reflected in all fields of life. The capitalist rulers of all the different countries are always fighting to prove that their country is the best in sports just like

they compete with each other in business and war. In international sporting events like the Olympics, cut-throat national competition takes first place before genuine international sportsmanship. The flags are always waving and all people must stand at attention when the anthems of the victorious countries are played after the main events. Many people still remember the 1968 Olympics when Tommy Smith and John Carlos were banned from representing the U.S. because they raised Black power salutes in opposition to the U.S. anthem. In the state-capitalist countries the story is the same. If you are an athlete who loses an international event you are treated as if you had committed high treason.

The conflict over this year's Olympics is just a continua-

tion of the long-time national competition. This time the U.S. is trying to prove it can do more than win; it can crash the games. Working and oppressed people must distance themselves from this Western imperialist power play by giving no support to the right-wing boycott. It did not concern these hypocrites when the U.S. was plastering Cambodia and Vietnam with bombs during the 1964, '68 and '72 Olympics. None of the Western imperialists are boycotting any games because French soldiers are still occupying the Central African Republic after landing troops and installing a puppet government there last year. Russia's record is no better. They united with the Western imperialists and participated in the last Olympics when many African countries withdrew to

protest New Zealand's participation in the Games, given its sporting ties with racist South Africa.

The invasion of Afghanistan must be condemned, but support for the U.S. and its lackeys does nothing to preserve Afghan independence. The real answer lies in the revolutionary takeover of the world from the capitalist rulers of the East and West. Only then will we be able to eliminate national oppression and build for sports which show a genuine spirit of international solidarity instead of cut-throat competition between national capitalists. □

(Reprinted from the February 27-March 26 issue of Forward, newspaper of the Revolutionary Marxist League of Jamaica.)

On the Cuban refugees

As we go to press, up to 10,000 Cubans remain camped on the grounds of the Peruvian embassy in Havana, waiting for exit visas to get out of the country. The sight of so many people clamoring to escape from Cuba is a stinging embarrassment to Fidel Castro's state-capitalist regime. It is also revealing the hypocrisy of the U.S. ruling class.

The affair began on April 4, when six Cubans used a bus to crash through the gates of the Peruvian embassy and asked for political asylum. The Cuban government, which brands all such actions as the work of "criminals" and "anti-social elements," demanded that embassy officials hand over the refugees. When the officials refused, the Cuban government removed the guards from in front of the embassy, saying it would no longer protect the embassy from "terrorist attacks." Radio Havana issued a public statement saying: "If the government of Peru wishes to receive into their country all the anti-socials and bums, we will be glad to authorize them to leave our country...."

In the next two days, thousands of Cubans poured into the embassy grounds. On April 6 the government finally cordoned off the streets around the embassy to prevent anyone else from getting in.

At the same time the government unleashed a slander campaign against the refugees. According to the **New York Times**, Radio Havana refers to the crowds inside the

embassy as "scum," "parasites," "delinquents" and "homosexuals."

Overall, the people at the embassy seem to come from all walks of life, including workers, students, artists, technicians and former political prisoners. Some of the people in the embassy are undoubtedly gay, since the Cuban regime is violently anti-gay. Gays are drummed out of many jobs and can be jailed for 10 months for "soliciting" or eight years for taking someone under 18 to a gay bar.

The main reason most give for wanting to leave Cuba is the economic hardships they suffer under Castro's regime. When Castro's July 26 Movement overthrew the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959, most Cubans hoped that a new era of freedom and prosperity was dawning in Cuba. Castro later proclaimed himself a "Marxist-Leninist" and promised the creation of a new "socialist man" in Cuba. But in fact he and his supporters set up a state-capitalist regime which continues to oppress the workers and peasants. Last November Raul Castro, Cuba's vice president, announced that the government planned to strengthen the managerial bureaucracy against workers who "fail to fulfill their social duty" and promised hard action to "recapture lost habits of work discipline." Meanwhile, the people face growing unemployment and shortages in food, clothing, housing and other consumer items. One refugee told reporters: "I have

no place to live. My children live in a park, and I live in the street. There are no houses. If only I could have a house to solve my problems. I've been in the street for a year."

The U.S. ruling class is reaping a propaganda bo-

10,000 freedom-loving Cubans" at the embassy.

But when it comes to providing a home for them, the U.S. ruling class insists they are someone else's problem. Although most want to come to the U.S., White House press secretary Jody Powell maintained that "The United States cannot meet all of these humanitarian problems around the world alone." It wasn't until April 14, 10 days after the occupation began, that the Carter administration finally agreed to accept one-third of the refugees. Even these will have to go through all kinds of screening procedures to make sure they are "acceptable" before they are allowed to enter the country. The administration is urging its allies in Latin America to

take in the rest.

In short, the U.S. is using the refugees as pawns in a propaganda war with Cuba, while palming off most of the responsibility for their future. It's instructive to compare the U.S. response to the refugees with the treatment accorded the deposed shah of Iran. When the Iranian people rose up and drove the butcher shah into exile, the U.S. ruling class was willing to risk the lives of its embassy personnel and provoke an international crisis to provide a safe refuge for its ally. The welfare of thousands of Cuban refugees means less to the U.S. capitalists than the life of a single member of the ruling class, or their ability to score some propaganda points off the state-capitalist countries. □

RSL DIRECTORY

NATIONAL OFFICE

PO Box 1288
New York, NY 10001

BOSTON

PO Box 114
Boston, MA 02166

CHICAGO

PO Box 6022
Chicago, IL 60680
(312) 226-5915

DETROIT

PO Box 485
Detroit, MI 48221
(313) 341-1250

LOS ANGELES

PO Box 327
Hollywood, CA 90028
(213) 661-5135

NEW YORK

PO Box 1288
New York, NY 10001
(212) 869-9239

SAN FRANCISCO

PO Box 1147
Berkeley, CA 94701

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Revolutionary Socialist League
Editorial Board:
Paul Benjamin, Susan Edmunds
William Falk, Ron Taber
Circulation Manager: Wayne Pierce
Production Manager: Lee Ramie
Production Staff: M. Evers,
Pat Nelson

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Recession. . .

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able. This is one of the main reasons for the drop in housing construction.

Midwestern farmers are also being hit. They normally borrow large amounts of money in the spring and pay it back at harvest in the fall. But right now many farmers are unable to afford the new rates. As a result, a large number of corn and soybean farmers are planting hay or letting their fields go fallow. They are also trying to raise money by selling their farm machinery.

In addition, consumer credit is much more difficult to get. The interest rates on these loans are held to 18 percent in most states by anti-usury laws. Rather than lend money at that rate, banks have been cancelling Master Charge and Visa accounts and refusing small loans.

Finally, the big corporations are also feeling the crunch. After forcing its workers to accept an inferior contract to try to save itself from bankruptcy, Chrysler Corporation can't find any

bankers with the same "spirit of sacrifice;" it has failed to come up with the private loans required to trigger the government-insured ones. Other corporations are signing agreements, known as "committed facilities," with their banks to make sure they can borrow money when they need it.

This credit squeeze will eventually choke off economic activity and lead to an economic downturn. Whether this downturn will be a recession (a relatively mild crisis) or a depression (a severe one) can't be determined now. However, given the state of the housing industry and such basic industries as auto and steel, the rampant inflation and debt expansion, it is almost certain that the downturn will be more severe than the 1974-75 recession.

Capitalists need depression. . .

A depression is the only real way the capitalists have

to relieve the symptoms of this sick economy. A depression would wring much of the fictitious capital (and hence much of the inflation) out of the economy by bankrupting thousands of capitalists. If, as in the earlier example, Armstrong Steel went broke, all the people with claims on future production would find themselves holding worthless pieces of paper.

A depression would also eventually boost productivity by bringing more of the manufacturing facilities into fewer hands, and lowering the prices of factories, machines and raw materials. Surviving companies would be able to buy up the newer existing facilities, junk the old plants, and build new ones. The result would be a bigger, more efficient companies.

Most important, a depression would lower wages and increase the rate of exploitation of the working class. With millions of people out of work, the capitalists would attack employed and unionized workers at will. Even skilled workers would find that there are people out of a job, ready to replace them. Using the threat of firings, the bosses would cut wages, change work rules and throw health and safety regulations out the window, thus laying the basis for increased rates of profit.

Atlantic seaboard had adequate transportation facilities.

In any new depression, one of the first companies to shut down would be Chrysler, which is the 10th largest industrial corporation in the U.S. and a major defense contractor. The Ford Motor Company, the third largest industrial corporation in the U.S. is also in bad shape and could be a casualty. In addition, business observers are worried about Midwestern railroads going broke and widespread bankruptcies of city governments. "We have to watch sector after sector to ensure they don't go bust," a person identified as an economic strategist told the **Wall Street Journal** April 11.

Finally, the ruling class wants to avoid a depression because they are scared of death of the working class.

Amid the suffering of the Great Depression of the 1930s, workers all around the world became convinced that capitalism had to be overthrown. Millions became militants, radicals and revolutionaries. In the U.S., workers fought with sit-down strikes and loaded rifles for trade unions that would protect them from capitalist exploitation. Unemployed workers organized and marched for jobs. In Europe the result was powerful working class movements and revolutions. The Depression also brought fascism and World War II.

A new depression would

create tremendous social conflict and strife and lead to the radicalization of masses of people. The lessons and experiences of the Black, Latin and anti-war movements of the 1960s have not been totally forgotten, and a new depression would probably create bigger and more militant mass movements than those of the 1930s.

One factor that increases the likelihood of an actual depression is the fact that economies of countries all over the world are headed downward at the same time. A few years ago, economic planners had the idea of forcing the U.S. into a recession while Europe and Japan were in an inflation/boom period. They figured that the other countries could help keep the U.S. recession from becoming a depression. Later on, they thought, when these other countries were experiencing their own recessions, the U.S., which would be in an upturn, would help buoy them up.

But it hasn't worked out that way. Just about all countries, including the state-capitalist countries, are now entering into economic recessions—all more or less at the same time. This synchronized downturn, along with the weakness of the dollar-based international monetary system, may actually hurl the entire capitalist system into a depression on the scale of the Depression of the 1930s. □

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...But fear consequences

Despite these advantages, however, the ruling class wants desperately to avoid a depression. First, no individual capitalist wants to be the fall guy who goes broke to help others.

Second, in today's developed capitalism it won't be small marginal companies going broke. Huge companies that are a central part of the entire system will go under. In the last recession, for example, the Penn Central Railroad, a vital circulation system for the Northeast, went broke. The government had to take over and reorganize it as Conrail to make sure the At-

Garment. . .

(Continued from page 6)
carried out we have had to confront the union leadership. We have achieved a united front with the organizers in those areas where it was possible. We have been confident of our strength, but know that alliances are necessary if they benefit the workers' interests. The union has tried to isolate us, to lessen our influence over the strikers. All this has been useless, because the strikers themselves are our strength.

We are confident that we will be able to continue on our path, overcoming any obsta-

cles. We believe that the correct strategy to organize the industry is to work through the existing unions. We want to fight the union bureaucrats on their own terrain and not give them a free hand as do other so-called revolutionary organizations.

We are not only fighting to organize the garment industry. We are also fighting to create the revolutionary party which will be able to carry out the socialist revolution, which will liberate the working class from the chains which imprison it under this system. □

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